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THE
HARDY COUNTRY

LITERARY LANDMARKS OF THE WESSEX NOVELS

BY

CHARLES G. HARPER

AUTHOR OF "THE INGOLDSBY COUNTRY," ETC.

"Here shepherds pipe their rustic song,
Their flocks and rural nymphs among."

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE

Dorsetshire, the centre of the "Hardy Country," the home of the Wessex Novels, is a land literally flowing with milk and honey: a land of great dairies, of flowers and bees, of rural industries, where rustic ways and speech and habits of thought live long, and the kindlier virtues are not forgotten in such stress of life as prevails in towns: a land desirable for its own sweet self, where you may see the beehives in cottage gardens and therefrom deduce that honey of which I have spoken, and where that flow of milk is no figure of speech. You may indeed hear the swish of it in the milking pails at almost every turn of every lane.

Thatch survives in every village, as nowhere else, and here quaint towns maintain their quaintness at all odds, while elsewhere foolish folk seek to be—as they phrase it—"up to date." It is good, you think, who explore these parts, to be out of date and reckless of all the tiresome worries of modernity.

Spring is good in Dorset, summer better, autumn—when the kindly fruits of the earth are ingathered and

the smell of pomace is sweet in the mellow air—best. Winter? Well, frankly, I don't know.

To all these natural advantages has been added in our generation the romantic interest of Mr. Thomas Hardy's novels of rural life and character, in which real places are introduced with a lavish hand. The identity of those places is easily resolved; and, that feat performed, there is that compelling force in his genius which inevitably, sooner or later, magnetically draws those who have read, to see for themselves what manner of places and what folk they must be in real life, from whose characteristics such poignant tragedy, such suave and admirable comedy, have been evolved. I have many a time explored Egdon, and observed the justness of the novelist's description of that sullen waste: have traversed Blackmoor Vale, where "the fields are never brown and the springs never dry," but where the roads—it is a cyclist's criticism—are always shockingly bad: in fine, have visited every literary landmark of the Wessex Novels. If I have not found the rustics so sprack-witted as they are in The Return of the Native *and other stories—why, I never expected so to find them, for I did not imagine the novelist to be a reporter. But—this is in testimony to the essential likeness to life of his women—I know "Bathsheba"; only she is not a farmer, nor in "Do'set," and I have met "Viviette" and "Fancy." They were called by other names, 'tis true; but they were, and are, those distracting characters come to life.*

A word in conclusion. No attempt has here been made to solemnly "expound" the novelist. He, I take it, expounds himself. Nor has it been thought necessary to exclude places simply for the reason that they by some chance do not find mention in the novels. These pages are, in short, just an attempt to record impressions received of a peculiarly beautiful and stimulating literary country, and seek merely to reflect some of the joy of the explorer and the enthusiasm of an ardent admirer of the novelist, who here has given tongues to trees and a voice to every wind.

CHARLES G. HARPER.

PETERSHAM, SURREY,
July 1904.

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THE HARDY COUNTRY

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARIES: THE HARDY COUNTRY DEFINED; FAWLEY MAGNA; OXFORD

In the literary partition of England, wherein the pilgrim may discover tracts definitely and indissolubly dedicated to Dickens, to Tennyson, to Ingoldsby, and many another, no province has been so thoroughly annexed or so effectively occupied as that associated with the Wessex novels written by Mr. Thomas Hardy. He holds Wessex in fee-simple, to the exclusion of all others; and so richly topographical are all those romances, that long ere sketch-maps showing his literary occupancy of it were prepared and published in the uniform edition of his works, there were those to whom the identity of most of his scenes offered no manner of doubt. By the circumstances of birth and of lifelong residence, the "Wessex" of the novels has come to denote chiefly his native county of Dorset, and in especial the neighbourhood of Dorchester, the county town; but Mr. Hardy was early an expansionist, and his outposts were long ago thrown forward, to at last make his

Wessex in the domain of letters almost coterminous with that ancient kingdom of Saxon times, which included all England south of the Thames and west of Sussex, with the exception of Cornwall. The very excellent sketch-map prepared for the definitive edition of Mr. Hardy's works very clearly shows the comparative density of the literary settlements he has made. Glancing at it, you at once perceive that what he chooses to term "South Wessex."—named in merely matter-of-fact gazetteers Dorsetshire—is thickly studded with names of his own mintage, unknown to guidebook or ordnance map, and presently observe that the surrounding divisions of Upper, North, Mid, Outer, and Lower Wessex—as who should say Hampshire, Berkshire, Wilts, Somerset, and Devon—are, to follow the simile already adopted, barely colonised.

His nearest frontier-post towards London is Castle Royal, to be identified with none other than Windsor ; while near by are Gaymead (Theale), Aldbrickham (Reading), and Kennetbridge (Newbury). In the midst of that same division of North Wessex, or Berkshire, are marked Alfredston and Marygreen, respectively the little town of Wantage, birthplace of Alfred the Great, and the small village of Fawley Magna, placed on the draughty skyline of the bare and shivery Berkshire downs.

Then, near the eastern border of Upper Wessex is Quartershot, or Aldershot, and farther within its confines Stoke-Barehills, by which name Basingstoke and the unclothed uplands partly surrounding it are indicated. Its "gaunt, unattractive, ancient church" is accurately imaged in a phrase, and it is just as true that the most familiar object of the

place is "its cemetery, standing among some picturesque mediæval ruins beside the railway"; for indeed Basingstoke cemetery and the fine ruins of the chapel once belonging to the religious who, piously by intent, but rather blasphemously to shocked ears, styled themselves the "Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost," stand immediately without

FAWLEY MAGNA.
"As old-fashioned as it was small."

the railway station. At Stoke-Barehills, Jude and Sue, visiting the Agricultural Show, were observed by Arabella, Jude's sometime wife, with some jealousy.

Finally, northernmost of all these transfigured outer landmarks, is Christminster, the university town and city of Oxford, whose literary name in these pages derives from the cathedral of Christ

there. This remote corner of his kingdom is especially and solely devoted to the grievous story of *Jude the Obscure*, a pitiful tale of frustrated ambition, originally published serially in *Harper's Magazine*, under the much more captivating, if less descriptive, title of *Hearts Insurgent*. The story opens at Fawley Magna, to whose identity a clue is found in the name of Fawley given the unhappy Jude. The village, we are told, was "as old-fashioned as it was small, and it rested in the lap of an upland adjoining the undulating North Wessex downs. Old as it was, however, the well-shaft was probably the only relic of the local history that remained absolutely unchanged. . . . Above all, the original church, hump-backed, wood-turreted and quaintly hipped, had been taken down, and either cracked up into heaps of road-metal in the lane, or utilised as pigsty walls, garden-seats, guard-stones to fences, and rockeries in the flower-beds of the neighbourhood. In place of it a tall new building of German-Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day." Who was that obliterator thus held up to satire? Inquiries prove the church to have been rebuilt in 1866, and its architect to have been none other than G. E. Street, R.A., than whom the middle Victorian period had no more accomplished architect. Truly enough, its design is something alien, but candour compels the admission that, however detached from local traditions, it is really a very fine building, and its designer quite undeserving of so slighting a notice.

HIGH STREET, OXFORD.

"It is a city of light. . . . There's a street in the place—the main street—that ha'n't another like it in the world."

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From Fawley the scene of Jude's tragedy changes to Christminster, the Oxford of everyday commerce. Oft had he, as a boy, seen from this vantage-point the faint radiance of its lights reflected from the sky at night, twenty miles away. His anticipations and disillusionments, his strong resolves and stumblings by the way, over stumbling-blocks of his own and of extraneous making, picture a strong character brought low, like Samson by Delilah—cheated of scholarly ambition by the guardians of learning, who open its gates only to wealth or scholarships acquired by early opportunity. Take *Jude the Obscure* as you will, it forms a somewhat serious indictment of university procedure: "They raise pa'sons there, like radishes in a bed. 'Tis all learning there—nothing but learning, except religion." Jude sought learning there, and Holy Orders, but never rose beyond his trade of stonemason, and, after many fitful wanderings through Wessex, ends tragically at Oxford.

Since *Jude the Obscure* was written Oxford has gained another historic personality, none the less real than the great figures of actual life who have trodden the pavements of its High Street. You may follow all the innermost thoughts of that mere character in a novel, and see fully exposed the springs that produce his actions; and thus he is made seem more human than all your Wolseys and great dignitaries, whose doings, smothered in dust, and whose motives, buried deep beneath their own subterfuges and the dark imaginings of historians with little but ancient verbiage to rely upon, seem only the spasmodic, involuntary capers of so many irresponsible jumping-jacks. Nowadays, when I

think of Oxford, it is to recall poor Jude Fawley's fascination by it, like the desire of the moth for the star, or for the candle that eventually scorches its wings and leaves it maimed and dying. "It is a city of light," he exclaimed, not knowing (as how should he have known?) that the light it emits is but the phosphorescent glow of decay. And when I walk the High Street, "the main street—that ha'n't another like it in the world," it is not of Newman or his fellow Tractarians I think, but of Jude the stone-mason, feeling with appreciative technical fingers the mouldings and crumbling stones of its architecture.

In one novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Mr. Hardy has made an expedition far beyond the confines of his Wessex. Away beyond "Lower Wessex," or Devonshire—itself scarce more than incidentally referred to in the whole course of his writings—he takes the reader to the north coast of Cornwall, the "furthest westward of all those convenient corners wherein I have ventured to erect my theatre for these imperfect little dramas of country life and passions; and it lies near to, or no great way beyond, the vague border of the Wessex kingdom, on that side which, like the westering verge of modern American settlements, was progressive and uncertain."

"Castle Boterel" he styles the stage of his tragical story of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*; a place to be found on maps under the style and title of Boscastle. That tiny port and harbour on the wildest part of a wild coast obtains its name, in a manner familiar to all students of Cornish topography, by a series of phonetic corruptions. Originally the site of a castle owned by the Norman family of De Bottreaux,

its name has in the course of centuries descended from that knightly designation to that it now bears. Leland, four hundred years ago, described the place as "a very filthy Toun and il kept," and probably had still in mind and in nostrils when he wrote the scent of the fish-cellars and the fish-offal which to this day go largely towards making up the bouquet of most of the smaller Cornish fishing-ports.

Still, as in Leland's time, goes the little brook, running down from the tremendously hilly background "into the Severn Se betwixt 2 Hylles," and still the harbour remains, from the mariner's point of view, "a pore Havenet, of no certaine Salvegarde," winding, as it does, in the shape of a double S, between gigantic rocky headlands, and most difficult of approach or exit. It will thus be guessed, and guessed rightly, that, although poor as a harbour, Boscastle is a place of commanding picturesqueness. Its Cornish atmosphere, too, confers upon it another distinction. In the romantic mind of the novelist the district is "pre-eminently (for one person at least) the region of dream and mystery. The ghostly birds, the pall-like sea, the frothy wind, the eternal soliloquy of the waters, the bloom, of dark purple cast, that seems to exhale from the shoreward precipices, in themselves lend to the scene an atmosphere like the twilight of a night vision."

But it is not always like that at Boscastle. There are days of bright sunshine, when the sea is in colour something between a sapphire and an opal, when the cliffs reveal unexpected hues and the sands of Trebarrow—the "Trebarwith Strand" of the novel—shine golden, in contrast with the dark

slaty headland of Willapark Point—the "cliff without a name" where Elfride, the owner of that pair of blue eyes, saves the prig, Henry Knight, by the singular expedient none other than the author of the Wessex novels would have conceived. The average reader may perhaps be allowed his opinion that it had been better for Elfride had she saved her underclothing and allowed Knight to drop from his precarious hand-hold on the cliff's edge into the sea below waiting for him.

The town of "St. Launce's" mentioned in the book is of course Launceston, and "Endelstow" is the village of St. Juliot's.

CHAPTER II

WINCHESTER: THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF WESSEX

But, to have done with these preliminary triflings in the marches of the Hardy Country, let us consider in what way the Londoner may best come to a thoroughgoing exploration of this storied land. On all counts—by force of easy access, and by its ancient circumstance—Winchester is indicated. "The city of Wintoncester, that fine old city, aforetime capital of Wessex," stands at the gate of this literary country and hard by the confines of the New Forest, to which by tradition and history it is closely akin. At one in feeling with that hoary hunting preserve, it is itself modern in but little measure, and loves to linger upon memories of the past. Here the Saxon and the Norman are not merely historical counters with which, to the ideas of unimaginative students, the dusty game of history was played; but do, by the presence of their works, make the least impressionable feel that they were creatures of blood and fibre, strong to rule, to make and unmake nations; groping darkly in superstition, without doubt, but perceiving the light, distant and dim, and striving with all the strength of their strong natures to win toward it. They fought as sturdily for Christianity as they had

done for paganism, and were not—it really seems necessary to insist upon it—creatures of parchment and the wax of which seals are sealed ; but lived as human a life as ourselves, and loved and hated, and despaired and triumphed, just as keenly, nay, with perhaps even greater keenness, than any Edwardian liege of this twentieth century. Still runs the Itchen, bright and clear as when the Romans came and the Saxons followed, to be in their turn ousted in governance by the Norman-French ; and still, although this England of ours be yet overlorded by the relics of Norman domination, it is the broad-shouldered, level-headed, stolid, and long-suffering Saxon who peoples Winchester and Wessex, and in him that ancient kingdom, although unknown to modern political geographies, survives.

Sweet and gracious city, I love you for old association and for your intrinsic worth, alike. Changing, although ever so slowly, with the years, your developments make, not as elsewhere, for black bitterness of heart and vain regrets for the things of sweet savour and good report, swept away into the dustheaps and potsherds of "progress," but for content and happy assent. In these later years, for example, it has occurred to Winchester to honour Alfred, the great Wessex king, warrior and lawgiver, born at Wantage, warring over all southern England, ruling at Winchester, dead at Faringdon in A.D. 901, and buried here in a spot still shown, in the long desecrated Hyde Abbey. That is a noble, heroic-sized bronze effigy of him, erected in 1901, to commemorate the millenary of this hero-king, and one in thorough keeping with Winchester's ancient dignity.

HIGH STREET, WINCHESTER.

"The city of Wintoncester, that fine old city, aforetime capital of Wessex."

Near by, where its imposing bulk is reared up against the giant background of St. Giles's Hill, you may still see and hear the Itchen rushing furiously under the old City Mill by Soke Bridge, where dusty millers have ground corn for a thousand years. Released from the mill-leat, the stream regains its placid temper and wanders suavely along daisy-dappled meads to St. Cross, and so at last to lose itself in Southampton Water; still fishful all the way, as in the days of old Izaak Walton himself, who lies in the south transept of the cathedral yonder, and has a sanctified place in these liberal-minded times in a tabernacle of the restored reredos, in the glorious company of the apostles, the saints, kings and bishops, who form a very mixed concourse in that remarkable structure. I fear that if they were all brought to life and introduced to one another, they would not form the happiest of families.

But that's as may be. From this vantage-point by King Alfred's statue—or "Ælfred," as the inscription learnedly has it, to the confusion of the unscholarly—you may see, as described in *Tess*, "the sloping High Street, from the West Gateway to the mediæval cross, and from the mediæval cross to the bridge"; but you can only make out a portion of the squat, low Norman tower of the cathedral itself; for here, instead of being beckoned afar by lofty spire, you have to seek that ancient fane, and, diligently inquiring, at last find it. Best it is to come to the cathedral by way of that aforesaid mediæval cross in the High Street, hard by the curiously overhanging penthouse shops, and under a low-browed entry,

which, to the astonishment of the stranger, instead of conducting into a backyard, brings one into the cathedral close, a lovely parklike space of trim lawns, ancient lime avenues, and noble old residences of cathedral dignitaries with nothing to do and exceedingly good salaries for doing it. It has been remarked, with an innocent, childlike wonder, that some sixty per cent. of the famous men whose careers are included in the *Dictionary of National Biography* were the sons of clergymen. No wonder at all, I take it, in this, for it is merely nature's compensating swing of the pendulum. The parents, living a life of repose, have been storing up energy for the use of their offspring, and thus our greatest empire-makers and men of action, and some of our greatest scoundrels too, have derived from beneath the benignant shadow of the Church.

That squat, heavy Norman tower just now spoken of has a history to its squatness—a history bound up with the tragical death of Rufus. The grave of the Red King in the cathedral forms the colophon of a tragical story whose inner history has never been, and never will be, fully explained ; but by all the signs and portents that preceded the ruthless king's death at Stoney Cross, where his heart was pierced by the glanced arrow said to have been aimed at the wild red deer by Walter Tyrrell, it should seem that the clergy were more intimately connected with that "accident" than was seemly, even in the revengeful and bloodstained ecclesiastics of that time. It must not be forgotten that the king had despoiled the Church and the Church's high dignitaries with a thorough and

comprehensive spoliation, nor can it be blinked that certain of them had denounced him and prophesied disaster with an exactness of imagery possible only to those who had prepared the fulfilment of their boding prophecies. "Even now," said one, "the arrow of retribution is fixed, the bow is stretched." This was not metaphor, merely: they prophesied who had with certainty prepared fulfilment. And when the thing was consummated and the body of the Red King was buried in the choir beneath the original central tower, the ruin in which that tower fell, seven years later, was not, according to clerical opinion, due to faulty construction and the insufficient support given to its great crushing weight by the inadequate pillars, but to the fact that one was buried beneath who had not received the last rites of the Church. If indeed that be so, the mills of God certainly do grind slowly.

For the rest, the cathedral is the longest in England. Longer than Ely, longer than St. Albans, it measures from east to west no less than 556 feet. As we read in the story of *Lady Mottisfont*, Wintoncester, among all the romantic towns in Wessex, is for this reason "probably the most convenient for meditative people to live in; since there you have a cathedral with nave so long that it affords space in which to walk and summon your remoter moods without continually turning on your heel, or seeming to do more than take an afternoon stroll under cover from the rain or sun. In an uninterrupted course of nearly three hundred steps eastward, and again nearly three hundred steps westward amid those magnificent tombs, you can,

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WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

" A cathedral with nave so long that it affords space in which to walk and summon your remoter moods."

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for instance, compare in the most leisurely way the dry dustiness which ultimately pervades the persons of kings and bishops with the damper dustiness that is usually the final shape of commoners, curates, and others who take their last rest out-of-doors. Then, if you are in love, you can, by sauntering in the chapels and behind the episcopal chantries with the bright-eyed one, so steep and mellow your ecstasy in the solemnities around that it will assume a rarer and fairer tincture."

In the city the curfew bell still rings out from the old Guildhall every evening at eight o'clock, the sentimental survival of an old-time very real and earnest ordinance; the West Gate remains in the wall, hard by the fragments of the royal castle; down in the lower extremity of the city the bishop's palace and castle of Wolvesey rears its shattered, ivy-covered walls: much in fine remains of Winchester's ancient state.

But now to make an end and to leave Winchester for Salisbury.

CHAPTER III

WINCHESTER TO STOCKBRIDGE AND WEYHILL

From Wintoncester to Melchester—that is to say, from Winchester to Salisbury—is twenty-three miles if you go by way of Stockbridge and Winterslow; if by the windings of the valley roads by King's Sombourne and Mottisfont, anything you like, from thirty upwards, for it is a devious route and a puzzling. We will therefore take the highway and for the present leave the byways severely alone.

The high road goes in an ascent, a white and dusty streak, from Winchester to Stockbridge, the monotonous undulations of the chalky downs relieved here and there on the skyline by distant woods, and the wayside varied at infrequent intervals by murmurous coppices of pines, in whose sullen depths the riotous winds lose themselves in hollow undertones or absolute silences. But before the traveller comes thus out into the country, he must, emerging from the West Gate, win to the open through the recent suburb of Fulflood; for "Winton" as its natives lovingly name it, and as the old milestones on this very road agree to style it, has after many years of slumber waked to life again, and is growing. It is not a large nor a bustling suburb, this recent fringe upon Winchester's ancient kirtle,

and you are soon out of it and breasting the slope of Roebuck Hill. Here, looking back, the tragic outlines of the prison, with grey-slated roof and ugly octagonal red-brick tower, cut the horizon: an unlovely palimpsest set above the mediæval graciousness of the ancient capital of all England, but one that has become, in some sort, a literary landmark in these later years, for it figures in the last scene of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In the last chapter of that strenuous romance you shall read how from the western gate of the city two persons walked on a certain morning with bowed heads and gait of grief. They were Angel Clare, the husband, and 'Liza-Lu, the sister of poor Tess, come to witness the hoisting of the black flag upon the tower of that inimical building. They witnessed this proof that "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess," not from this Stockbridge road, but from the first milestone on the road to Romsey, whence the city may be seen "as in an isometric drawing" set down in its vale of Itchen, "the broad cathedral tower with its Norman windows and immense length of aisle and nave, the spires of St. Thomas's, the pinnacled tower of the college, and, more to the right, the tower and gables of the ancient hospice, where to this day the pilgrim may receive his dole of bread and ale. Behind the city swept the rotund upland of St. Catherine's Hill; further off, landscape beyond landscape, till the horizon was lost in the radiance of the sun hanging above it."

Turning away from the contemplation of these things, and overpassing the crest of Roebuck Hill

and its sponsorial inn, the road dips down suddenly into the tiny village of Weeke, whose name is sometimes, with romantic mediævalism, spelled "Wyke." For myself, did I reside there, I would certainly have my notepaper stamped "Wyke next Winchester," and find much satisfaction therein. Wyke consists, when fully summed up, of a characteristic rural Hampshire church, with little wooden belfry and walls of flint and red brick, of some scattered farms and of a roadside pond, a great prim red-bricked house of Georgian date, and a row of pollard limes on a grassy bank overlooking the road.

And then? Then the road goes on, past more uplands, divided into fields whose smooth convexity gives the appearance of even greater size than they possess: every circumstance of their featureless rotundity disclosed from the highway across the sparse hedges, reduced by free use of the bill-hook to the smallest semblance of a hedge, consistent with the preservation of a boundary. Wayside trees are to seek, and the wayfarer pants in summer for lack of shade, and in winter is chilled to the bone, as the winds roam free across Worthy downs.

Such is the way up Harestock Hill; not so grim as perhaps this description may convey, but really very beautiful in its sort, with a few cottages topping the rise where a signpost points a road to Littleton and Crawley, and where the white-topped equatorial of an observatory serves to emphasise a wholly unobstructed view over miles of sky. It is only from vast skyfields such as this that one hears the song of the skylark on those still summer days when the sky is of the intensest azure blue and the bees are busy wherever

the farmer has left nooks for the wild-flowers to grow. On such days the dark woods of Lainston, crowning the distant ridge, lend a welcome shade. Fortunately they are easy of access, for the road runs by them and an inconspicuous stile leads directly into one of the rook-haunted alleys of those romantic avenues with which the place is criss-crossed. A slightly marked footpath through undergrowth thickly spread with the desiccated leaves of autumns past, where the hedgehog hides and squirrels and wild life of every kind abound, leads by a crackling track of dried twigs and the empty husks of last year's beech-nuts to another stile and across a byroad into another of the five grand avenues leading to Lainston House, a romantically gloomy, but architecturally very fine, late seventeenth-century mansion embowered amid foliage, with a ruined manorial chapel close at hand in a darkling corner amid the close-set mossy boles of the trees. The spot would form an ideal setting for one of the Wessex tales, and indeed has a part in a sufficiently queer story in actual life. That tale is now historic—how Walpole's "Ælia Lælia Chudleigh" was in 1745 privately married, in this now roofless chapel, to Captain Hervey, a naval officer who afterwards succeeded to the title of third Earl of Bristol. "Miss Chudleigh," however, she still continued to be at Court. Twenty-five years later she was the heroine of a bigamy case, having married, while her first husband was living, Pierrepont, Duke of Kingston. This was that lively lady who, Walpole tells us, "went to Ranelagh as Iphigenia, but as naked as Andromeda."

The ruined chapel has long been in that condition. Its font lies, broken and green with damp, on the grass, and the old ledger-stones that cover the remains of Chudleighs and Dawleys, successive owners of the manor, are cracked and defaced. The "living" of Lainston is worth £60 per annum, and goes with that of the neighbouring village of Sparsholt, the vicar holding it by virtue of preaching here once a year. Stress of weather occasionally obliges him to perform this duty under the shelter of an umbrella, when his congregation, like that of the saint who preached to the birds, is composed chiefly of rooks and jackdaws. But their responses are not always well timed, and the notes of the jackdaw sound uncommonly like the scoffings of the ribald.

One emerges from Lainston woods only to perceive this to be a district of many woodlands. Across the road is Northwood, where, close by Eastman's great school, are thick coppices of hazels and undergrowths that the primroses and bluebells love. In another direction lies Sparsholt. None may tell what the "Spar" in the place-name of this or the other Sparsholt in Berkshire means, but "holt" signifies a wood; and thus we may perceive that the surroundings must still wear very much the aspect they owned when the name was conferred. Sparsholt has no guidebook attractions—nothing but its old thatched cottages and quiet surroundings to recommend it. But the fragrant scent of the woodsmoke from cottage hearths is over all. You may see its blue filmy wreaths curling upwards on still days, against the dark background of foliage. It is a rustic fragrance never forgotten, an aroma which,

go whithersoever you will, brings back the sweet memory of days that were, and the sound of a voice in more actual fashion than possible to the notes of a well-remembered song, or the scent of a rose.

They are not woods of forest trees that beset this district, but hillside tangles of scrub oaks, of hazels and alders, where the wild-flowers make a continual glory in early spring. There are the labyrinths of No Man's Land, the intricacies of Privet and Crab Wood, through whose bosquets run the long-deserted Roman road from Winchester to Old Sarum, and the nameless spinneys dotted everywhere about. Away on the horizon you may perceive a monument, capping a hill. It is no memorial of gallantries in war, but is the obelisk erected on Farley Mount to the horse of a certain "Paulet St. John," which jumped with him into a chalk-pit twenty-five feet deep, emerging, with his rider, unhurt. That was in 1733. An inscription tells how that wonderful animal was afterwards entered for the Hunters' Plate, under the name of "Beware Chalk Pit," at the races on Worthy downs, and won it.

Continuing on to Stockbridge, whose race-meeting has recently been abolished, the way grows grim indeed, with that Roman grimness characteristic of all the Wessex chalky down country. The road is long, and at times, when the sun is setting and the landscape fades away in purple twilight, the explorer becomes obsessed, against all reason, with the weird notion that the many centuries of civilisation are but a dream and the distant ages come back again. To this bareness the pleasant little town of Stock-bridge, situated delightfully in the valley of the

Anton, is a gracious interlude. In its old churchyard the curious may still see the whimsical epitaph to John Bucket, landlord of the "King's Head" inn, who died, aged 67, in 1802 :

> And is, alas! poor Bucket gone?
> Farewell, convivial honest John.
> Oft at the well, by fatal stroke
> Buckets like pitchers must be broke.
> In this same motley shifting scene,
> How various have thy fortunes been.
> Now lifting high, now sinking low,
> To-day the brim would overflow.
> Thy bounty then would all supply
> To fill, and drink, and leave thee dry.
> To-morrow sunk as in a well,
> Content unseen with Truth to dwell.
> But high or low, or wet or dry,
> No rotten stave could malice spy.
> Then rise, immortal Bucket, rise
> And claim thy station in the skies;
> Twixt Amphora and Pisces shine,
> Still guarding Stockbridge with thy sign.

In 1715, when the poet Gay rode horseback to Exeter and wrote a rhymed account of his journey for the Earl of Burlington, he described Stockbridge in doleful dumps. Why? Because for seven years there had been no election :

> Sad melancholy ev'ry visage wears;
> What! no election come in seven long years!
> Of all our race of Mayors, shall Snow alone
> Be by Sir Richard's dedication known?
> Our streets no more with tides of ale shall float!
> Nor cobblers feast three years upon one vote.

Some of this seems cryptic, but it is explained by the fact of Sir Richard Steele having published, September 22nd, 1713, a quarto pamphlet entitled

The Importance of Dunkirk considered . . . in a letter to the Bailiff of Stockbridge, whose name was John Snow. The number of voters at Stockbridge was then about seventy, and its population chiefly cobblers. To say it was a corrupt borough is merely to state what might be said of almost every one at that time; but it seems to have been especially notable, even above its corrupt fellows, for a contemporary chronicler is found writing: "It is a very wet town and the voters are wet too." He then continues, as one deploring the depreciation of securities, "The ordinary price of a vote is £60, but better times may come." But when elections only came septennially, the wet voters who subsisted three years upon one vote must have gone dry, poor fellows, an unconscionable while.

Some ten miles north of Stockbridge, on the road past Andover, and overlooking the valley of the Anton, is Weyhill, a Hardy landmark of especial importance, for it is the point whence starts that fine tale, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, described in its sub-title as "The Life and Death of a Man of Character." It is a pleasant country of soft riverain features by which you who seek to make pilgrimage to this spot shall fare, coming into the quiet, cheerful little market-town of Andover, and thenceforward near by the villages which owe their curiously feminine names to their baptismal river, the Anton. There you shall find Abbot's Ann and Little Ann, and I daresay, if you seek long enough, Mary Ann also. Weyhill, a hamlet in the parish of Penton Mewsey, is a place—although to look at it, you might not

suspect so—of hoary antiquity, and its Fair—still famous, and still the largest in England—old enough to be the subject of comment in *Piers Plowman's Vision*, in the line:

At Wy and at Wynchestre I went to ye fair.

Alas that such things should be! this old-time six-days' annual market is now reduced to four. It is held between October 10th and 13th, and divided into the Sheep, Horse, Hops, Cheese, Statute or Hiring, and Pleasure Fairs. On each of these days the three miles' stretch of road from Andover is thronged with innumerable wayfarers and made unutterably dusty by the cabs and flys and the dense flocks of sheep and cattle on their way to the Fair ground.

There are quaint survivals at Weyhill Fair. An umbrella-seller may still, with every recurrent year, be seen selling the most bulgeous and antique umbrellas, some of them almost archaic enough to belong to the days of Jonas Hanway, who introduced the use of such things in the eighteenth century; and unheard-of village industries display their produce to the astonished gaze. Here, for example, you see an exhibit of modern malt-shovels, together with the maker of them, the "W. Choules from Penton" whose name is painted up over his unassuming corner; and although the Londoner has probably never heard of, and certainly never seen, malt-shovels, the making of them is obviously still a living industry.

Greatly to the stranger's surprise, Weyhill, although in fact situated above the valley of the Anton, does not appear to be situated on a hill at

WEYHILL FAIR.

"Malt-shovels . . . the making of them is obviously still a living industry."

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all. The road to "Weydon Priors," by which name it figures in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, is indeed, as the novelist sufficiently hints, of no very marked features. It is "a road neither straight nor crooked, neither level nor hilly," and at times other than Fair-time is as quiet a country road—for a high road—as you shall meet; and, except for that one week in the year, Weyhill is as a derelict village. There, on a grassy tableland, stand, deserted for fifty-one weeks out of every fifty-two, the whitewashed booths and rows of sheds that annually for a brief space do so strenuous a trade, and scarce a human being comes into view. Even now, just as in the beginning of the story, Weyhill does not grow: "Pulling down is more the nater of Weydon."

It is on the last day of the old six-days' Fair, in 1829, that the story opens, with a man and woman—the woman carrying a child—walking along this dusty road. That they were man and wife was, according to the novelist's sardonic humour, plain to see, for they carried along with them a "stale familiarity, like a nimbus." The man was the hay-trusser, Michael Henchard, whose after rise to be Mayor of Casterbridge and whose final fall are chronicled in the story. This opening scene is merely in the nature of a prologue, disclosing the itinerant hay-trusser seeking work, coming to the Fair and there selling his wife for five guineas to the only bidder, a sailor—the second chapter resuming the march of events eighteen years later.

CHAPTER IV

STOCKBRIDGE TO SALISBURY AND STONEHENGE

RETURNING to Stockbridge, *en route* for Salisbury, eight miles more of roads of the same unchanging characteristics, but growing more plentifully carpeted with crushed flints as we advance, bring us to Wiltshire and to a junction with the Exeter Road from Andover at Lobcombe Corner. In the neighbourhood are "the Wallops," as local parlance refers to a group of three villages, Over and Nether Wallop, with the wayside settlement of Little (or Middle) Wallop in between. It is this last-named to which Mr. Hardy refers when he tells how the ruined and broken-hearted Mayor of Casterbridge, fleeing from the scene of his vanished greatness and resuming his early occupation of hay-trusser, became employed at a "pastoral farm near the old western highway. . . . He had chosen the neighbourhood of this artery from a sense that, situated here, though at a distance of fifty miles, he was vitually nearer to her whose welfare was so dear than he would be at a roadless spot only half as remote." Dorchester, otherwise Casterbridge, is in fact just forty-nine and a half miles distant, down this old Exeter Road.

In less than another mile on our westward way

the sight of a solitary house in all this apparently uninhabited wilderness arouses speculations in the pilgrim's mind—speculations resolved on approach, when the sight of the recently restored picture-sign of the "Pheasant," reared up on its posts on the short grass of the open down, opposite its door, proclaims this to be the old coaching inn once famed as "Winterslow Hut." None ever spoke of the inn in those days as the "Pheasant," although that was the sign of it, plainly to be seen; as "Winterslow Hut" it was always known, and a more lonely, forbidding place of seclusion from the haunts of man it would be difficult to find. It was once, appropriately enough, the retreat of a lonely, forbidding person—the self-selected place of exile from society of Hazlitt, the essayist, who, parting from his wife at the village of West Winterslow (whence the inn takes its name of "Winterslow Hut") two miles away, lived here from 1819 to 1828. Here he wrote the essays on "Persons one would wish to have seen," and the much less sociable essay, "On Living to One's Self"—an art he practised here to his own satisfaction and the cheerful resignation of the many persons with whom he quarrelled. And here he saw the Exeter Mail and the stage-coaches go by, and must have found the place even lonelier, in the intervals after their passing, than it seems now that the Road, as an institution, is dead and the Rail conveys the traffic to and from Salisbury and the west, some two miles distant, across country hidden from view from this point beneath the swelling shoulders of the unchanging downs.

Salisbury spire is soon seen, when the long drop

into the valley of the Wiltshire Avon, down Three Mile Hill, begins ; its slender spire, the tallest in England, thrusting its long needle-point 404 feet into the blue, and oddly peering out from the swooping sides of the downs, long before any suspicion of Sarum itself—as the milestones style it—has occupied the mind of the literary pilgrim.

Salisbury, like some bland and contented elderly spinster, does not look its age. When you are told how Old Sarum was abandoned, New Sarum founded, and everything recreated *ad hoc* at the command of Bishop Poore, impelled thereto by a vision, in the then customary way, you are so impressed with what we are used to regard as such thoroughly "American" proceedings that you forget, in the apparent modernity of such a method, how very long ago all this was done. This great change of site took place about 1220, and sixty years later the great cathedral, remarkable and indeed unique among all our cathedrals for being designed and built, from the laying of the foundation stone to the roofing-in of the building, in one—the Early English—style, was completed. It was actually a century later that the spire itself was finished.

Much of this seeming youthfulness of Salisbury is due to the regularity of plan upon which the city is laid out, and to the comparative breadth of its streets. To that phenomenally simple-minded person, Tom Pinch, whose like certainly could never have been met with outside the pages of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Salisbury seemed "a very desperate sort of place ; an exceedingly wild and dissipated city." Here we smile superior, although it is true

that in his short story, *On the Western Circuit*, Mr. Hardy presents Melchester, as he names this fair city, as given over to blazing orgies in the progress of Melchester Fair, with steam-trumpeting merry-go-rounds, glamour and glitter, glancing young women no better than they ought to be, and an amorous young barrister much worse than he should have been. Granting the truth of this picture of Melchester Fair, it is to be observed that this is but an interlude in a twelvemonth's programme of polished, decorous, and well-ordered urbanity. Its character is more truly portrayed in *Jude the Obscure*, where Sue Bridehead having gone to the city, to enter the Training College in the Close, her cousin Jude follows her. He found it "a quiet and soothing place, almost entirely ecclesiastical in its tone; a spot where worldly learning and intellectual smartness had no establishment." It was here he obtained work at his trade of stone-mason, labouring on the restoration of the cathedral; here that Sue shocked his ecclesiastical and mediæval bent, meeting his suggestion that they should sit for a talk in the cathedral by the proposal that she would rather wait in the railway station: "That's the centre of town life now—the cathedral has had its day!" To his shocked interjection, "How modern you are!" she replied defensively, "I am not modern, either. I am more ancient than mediævalism, if you only knew"; meaning thereby that she was enamoured of classicism and the old pagans.

To Sue the cathedral was not unsympathetic merely by force of that clear-cut regularity which impresses most beholders with a sense of a splendid,

but cold, perfection. There are those who compare this great fane with Tennyson's Lady Clara Vere de Vere :

> Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
> Dead perfection, no more ;

but while those critics are critics only of design and carved stones, who would welcome something in its regular features paralleled by a tip-tilted nose in a human face, Sue was obviously preoccupied by the sense that it, not alone among cathedrals, has outlived the devotional needs that produced it, and is little more than a magnificent museum of architectural antiquities. That magnificence would be even more complete and pronounced had not the egregious James Wyatt been let loose upon the "restoration" of it, towards the close of the eighteenth century, when he cast out and destroyed most of its internal adornments, and pulled down and utterly obliterated the beautiful detached bell tower, coeval with the cathedral itself, which stood, away from it, on the north side.

It is perhaps worthy of remark that there may be noticed in the cathedral the tomb, with somewhat bombastic inscription, of Dr. D'Albigny Turberville, the seventeenth-century oculist, who died, aged 85, in 1696. The flagrant Latin, which tells us that his fame shall perish no sooner than this marble, does not allow for human forgetfulness, nor for the advances of science.

The Normal School in the Close, whence Sue escaped, after being confined to her room as a punishment for her night's escapade with Jude, is a prominent building, described as "an ancient

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SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.

"The most graceful architectural pile in England."

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edifice of the fifteenth century, once a palace . . . with mullioned and transomed windows, and a courtyard in front shut in from the road by a wall."

From the ever-impending tragedy of Jude's ambitions it is a relief to turn to the pure comedy of Betty Dornell, the first Countess of Wessex, in that collection of diverting short stories, *A Group of Noble Dames*. Looking upon those two old inns, the "Red Lion" in the High Street and the "White Hart," we are reminded that it was to the first-named that Betty resorted with that husband with whom, although married at an early age, she had not lived.

"'Twice we met by accident,' pleaded Betty to her mother. 'Once at Abbot's Cernel and another time at the "Red Lion," Melchester.'

"'O thou deceitful girl!' cried Mrs. Dornell. 'An accident took you to the "Red Lion" whilst I was staying at the "White Hart"! I remember —you came in at twelve o'clock at night and said you'd been to see the cathedral by the light o' the moon!'

"'My ever-honoured mamma, so I had! I only went to the "Red Lion" with him afterwards.'"

Nine miles to the north of Melchester stands Stonehenge, reached after their flight through the deserted midnight streets of the city by Tess and Angel Clare, vainly endeavouring to elude justice after the murder of the sham D'Urberville at Sandbourne. The night was "as dark as a cave," and a stiff breeze blew as they came out upon the black solitudes of Salisbury Plain. For some miles they had proceeded thus, when "on a sudden

Clare became conscious of some vast erection close in his front, rising sheer from the grass. They had almost struck themselves against it.

"'What monstrous place is this?' said Angel.

"'It hums,' said she. 'Hearken!'

"The wind, playing upon the edifice, produced a booming tune, like the note of some gigantic one-stringed harp." It was indeed Stonehenge, "a very Temple of the Winds."

And here, as the night wore away, and Tess lay sleeping on the Altar Stone, and the great trilithons began to show up blackly against the coming dawn, the figure of a man advancing towards them appeared rising out of the hollows of the great plain. At the same time Clare heard the brush of feet behind him: they were surrounded. Thoughts of resistance came to him; but "'It's no use, sir,' said the foremost plain-clothes man: 'There are sixteen of us on the Plain, and the whole country is reared.'" And so they stood watching while Tess finished her sleep.

Stonehenge sadly requires such romantic passages as this to renew its interest, for, truth to tell, the first glimpse of this mysterious monument of prehistoric ages is wofully disappointing. No use to strive against that disappointment as you come up the long rises from Amesbury under the midday sun and see its every time-worn cranny displayed mercilessly in the impudent eye of day: the interval between anticipation and realisation is too wide, and the apparent smallness and insignificance of the great stone circles must, although unwillingly, be allowed. This comparative insignificance is, however, largely the effect of their almost boundless

STONEHENGE.

"The night wore away and the great trilithons began to show up blackly against the coming dawn."

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environment of vast downs, tumid with the attendant circles of prehistoric tumuli, each tumulus or barrow crowned with its clump of trees, like the tufted plumes of a hearse.

Mystery continues to shroud the origin of Stonehenge, which was probably standing when the Romans first overran Britain, and seems by the most reasoned theories to have really been a Temple of the Sun. Its name is only the comparatively modern one of "Stanenges," or "the hanging stones," given by the Saxons, who discovered it with as much astonishment as exhibited by any one of a later age, and so named it, not from any reference to the capital punishment of *sus. per coll.*, but from the great lintel-stones that are laid flat upon the tall rude columns, and may fancifully be said to hang in mid-air, at a height of twenty-five feet.

Those who speak of Stonehenge remaining a "monument to all time," speak not according to knowledge, for the poor old relic is becoming sadly weatherworn and decrepit, and has aged rapidly of late years. No good has been wrought it by the fussy interferences and impertinences of "scientific" men, who, taking advantage of an alleged necessity for shoring up one the largest stones, dug about the soil and strove to wrest its secret by the method of sifting the spadesful of earth and stone chippings. Then a last indignity befell it. Sir Edward Antrobus, of Amesbury, lord of the manor, claimed Stonehenge as his manorial property, and, erecting a barbed-wire fence around it, levied a fee of a shilling a head for admission through the turnstiles that click you through, for all the world as though

you were entering some Earl's Court Exhibition. The impudence that has found it possible to do these things, in defiance of undoubted public rights of way, bulks majestically—much larger than Stonehenge itself, whose grey pile it indeed belittles and vulgarises.

CHAPTER V

THE OLD COACH-ROAD: SALISBURY TO BLANDFORD

It is thirty-eight and a half miles from Salisbury to Dorchester, the "Casterbridge" of the novels, along the old coach-road to Exeter. Speaking as an exploratory cyclist, I would ten times rather go the reverse way, from west to east, for the gradients are all against the westward traveller, and westerly winds are the prevailing airs during summer and autumn. It is, indeed, a terribly difficult road, exposed, and very trying in its long rises. One charming interlude there is, three miles from Salisbury, at the beautifully situated little village of Coombe Bissett, set down in the deep valley of an affluent of the Wiltshire Avon; but it is heartbreaking work climbing out of it again, up the inclines of Crowden Down. At eight miles' distance from Salisbury the old Woodyates Inn, long since re-christened the "Shaftesbury Arms," stands in a lonely situation beside the road, looking regretful for bygone coaching days. Its old name, deriving from "wood-gates," indicated its position on the south-western marches of the wooded district of Cranborne Chase. When railways disestablished coaches and the road resumed its solitude, the old inn became for a time the home of William Day's

training establishment for racehorses. He tells, in his recollections, of the drinking habits of the old Wiltshire farmers in general, and of two in particular, who used to call at Woodyates when on their way to or from Salisbury. They would talk, over the fire and their glasses of grog, somewhat in this fashion of their drunken exploits when riding home horseback: "Well, John, I fell off ten times." "Yes, Thomas, and I fell off a dozen times: you see, I rode the old black horse, and

PENTRIDGE.
The "Trantridge" of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

he always jerks me about so." It was said that there was scarcely a yard of ground over the eight miles that these worthies had not fallen on to from their horses.

At the distance of a mile from the coach-road at this point, where, by the way, we leave Wilts and enter Dorset, is the Hardy landmark of "Trantridge," to be identified with the little village of Pentridge set down on the map. It was to Trantridge that Tess came early in her career, from her home at Marnhull in the Vale of Blackmore, to take service with Mrs. Stoke-D'Urberville of The

Slopes, relict of Mr. Simon Stoke, merchant or money-lender, who had unwarrantably assumed the name, the crest, and arms of the knightly D'Urbervilles—dead and gone and powerless to resent the affront. It would be useless to seek The Slopes, rising in all the glory of its new crimson brick "like a geranium bloom against the subdued colours around"; but plain to see, not far away, is the "soft azure landscape of the Chase—a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England, of undoubted primæval date." It was in the Chase that the ruin of Tess was wrought by Alec D'Urberville.

The exceedingly rustic village of Pentridge nestles under the lee of a long, partly wooded hill, probably the "ridge" referred to in the place-name. In the little highly restored or rebuilt church with the stone spirelet is now to be seen, since August, 1902, when it was erected, the plain white marble tablet:

To the Memory of
ROBERT BROWNING,
of Woodyates, in this parish, who died Nov. 25th, 1746,
and is the first known forefather of
Robert Browning, the poet.

He was formerly footman and butler in the
Bankes family.

"All service ranks the same with God."
Browning.

This Tablet
was erected by some of the poet's friends and admirers
1902.

Much reflected glory doubtless accrues to "the Bankes family" from this tablet, which owes its being

to the exertions of Dr. F. J. Furnivall. It seems that the poet's ancestor, after severing his connection with the Bankes, became landlord of the Woodyates Inn, and churchwarden here.

This entrance to Dorsetshire is not so favourable an one as that, for example, from Somerset, by Templecombe and Stalbridge or Sherborne, where Dorset is indeed like unto the Land of Promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, where herds of cattle low musically in mead or byre, and the earth is alluvial—rich, deep, and sticky.

Here is the more arid, elevated country of open down; chalky, and producing only coarse grass, pine-trees, bracken, and furze—a sheep-grazing, as opposed to a cattle-rearing, district. Dorset is indeed a greatly varied county in the character of its soils. The sheep-grazing districts may be said to be this of the north-east border, and those other stretches of lofty, almost waterless chalk downs, running due east and west, parallel with the coast, with a similarly lengthy, but broader, stretch in a like direction, from where the downs rise from the Stour at Sturminster Marshall, past Milton Abbas and Cerne Abbas, on to Beaminster. In between these are the valleys of the River Frome—the "Vale of Great Dairies" of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and the "Vale of Little Dairies" in the same story, otherwise Blackmore Vale. A glance at the map will show the River Frome flowing in its "green trough of sappiness and humidity" from the neighbourhood of Beaminster, past Chilfroom, Frome Vanchurch, and Frampton, which most obviously take their name from the stream, to Dorchester, Moreton, Wool, and

Wareham, whence it pours its enriching waters into Poole Harbour; and another glance will discover the Vale of Little Dairies, or Blackmore, bounded by Blandford and Minterne Magna, and the heights of High Stoy on the south, and by Shaftesbury, Wincanton, and Sherborne on the north; including within its compass Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton, together with a host of small villages. The natural outlet of this last district—which, despite the name of "Little Dairies," given to it in the pages of the novels, is a larger area than that of the Frome valley, and of course produces in the aggregation more—is the railway junction of Templecombe, which, beyond being a mere junction, is also an exceedingly busy and bustling place for the receipt of all this dairy produce of Blackmore.

Such are, roughly, the main agricultural divisions of Dorset, which is, to the hard-working farmer who is his own bailiff, with his family to aid in the dairy-work, still a county where ends may be made to meet, with a considerable selvedge or overlapping to sweeten his industry. Despite a very general belief current in towns, there are still considerable numbers of these families. The farmer and his wife have largely grown out of the rustic speech, and their sons and daughters—the daughters especially, the adaptive dears!—have got culture for leisure moments, but they are none the less practical for that. A generation ago, perhaps, things were not so pleasing, for the then would-be up-to-date attempted the absurdity of aping the leisured classes, while seeking to carry on farming and obtain a living by it. Such as those came to grief, and

were rightly the butts of outside observers, as well as of moralists of their own class. A thorough-going farmer of that period, who saw the daughters of his neighbour going on the way to their music-lesson, reported his feelings and sayings as follows: "While I and an' my wife were out a-milkēn, they maïdens went by, an' I zaid to her, 'Where be they maïdens a-gwoin'?' an' she zaid, 'Oh! they be a-gwoin' to their music.' An' I zaid, 'Oh! a-gwoin' to their music at milkēn-time! That 'ull come to zom'ehat, that wull.'" And it doubtless did come to a pretty considerable deal, if—as a doctor might say—the course of the disease was normal.

Resuming the main road, which for the distance of a mile beyond Woodyates is identical with the old Roman road, the Via Iceniana, that ancient relic of a past civilisation may presently be seen parting company from the modern highway, and going off by itself, to the left, across the downs, making for the great fortified hill of Badbury Rings. It is known locally as the Achling Dyke, and is somewhat conspicuously elevated above the bracken, the gorse, and heather of these wilds.

Now, passing a few scattered cottages, we come—in fifteen miles from Coombe Bissett—to a village, the first on this lonely main road. Tarrant Hinton, this welcome village, stands on a sparkling little stream, without doubt the "tarrant," or torrent, whence it and a small sisterhood of neighbouring settlements obtain a generic name. There are Tarrant Gunville, Tarrant Monkton, Tarrant Rawston, Tarrant Rushton, Tarrant Keynston, and Tarrant Crawford; and then, as below the last-named place

the little stream falls into the Stour, there are no more Tarrants.

To Tarrant Gunville belongs Eastbury Park, a place of Hardyesque and romantic aspect; but, so far, not made the vehicle of any of his stories. It has, to be sure, a story of its own—a tale of vaulting ambition which fell on t'other side. Eastbury was built, like many another ponderous and over-

EASTBURY.

grown mansion of the eighteenth century, by Vanbrugh, to the commission of George Dodington, a former Lord of the Admiralty, who, growing enormously rich by long-continued peculation, blossomed out as a patron of the arts and a friend of literature. But before his huge house could be completed he was gathered to his fathers and to judgment upon his illegitimate pickings, leaving all his wealth to his grandnephew, George Bubb

Dodington, afterwards Lord Melcombe, who lavished £140,000 on the completion of the works. Here he too became a patron, and entertained the literary men of his time until 1762, when, dying, the property went to Earl Temple, who, unable to afford the expense of maintaining the immense place, actually offered—and offered in vain—an income of £200 a year to any one who would reside at Eastbury and keep it in repair. As this bait failed, the great house was dismantled and demolished, piecemeal, in 1795, only one wing remaining to attest its former grandeur.

But traces of that grandeur are not wanting, from the iron railings, stone piers, and decorative kerbs, carved boldly with an acanthus-leaved design, that conduct into the demesne, to the magnificent clumps of beeches and other forest trees studding the sward of what was the park; and that remaining wing itself, still disclosing in its arcade, or loggia, something of Vanbrugh's design.

Eastbury, of course, is haunted—so much is to be expected of such a place; but those who have seen the headless coachman and his ghostly four-in-hand issuing from the park gates, or returning, are growing scarce, and times are become so sceptical that even they cannot obtain credence. So, with a sigh for the decay of belief, we will e'en on through Pimperne down to Blandford, which good town, of fine dignified classic architectural presence, the coach-road enters in a timid back-doors manner, down a narrow byway.

Blandford is further dignified by that curious pedantic Latinity very marked in many Dorsetshire place-names. In this manner it is made to figure

as "Blandford Forum," a rendering of "Blandford Market." In Mr. Thomas Hardy's pages it is "Shottsford Forum," and so appears in his story of *Barbara of the House of Grebe*, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and again in *The Woodlanders*, wherein it is stated, from the mouth of a rustic character, that "Shottsford is Shottsford still: you can't victual your carcass there unless you've got money, and you can't buy a cup of genuine there, whether or no"; this last a sad drawback from the amenities of a delightful town. But there is a very excellent pump, and an historic, in the broad High Street, whereon, cast in enduring iron, it may be read how a certain John Bastard, a "considerable sharer" in the great calamity by which Blandford was burnt in 1731, "humbly erected this monument, in grateful Acknowledgement of the Divine Mercy, That has since raised this Town, Like the Phœnix from its Ashes, to its present flourishing and beautiful State." That, it will be allowed, is rather a fine, curly, and romantic way of putting it. A rider to this inscription goes on to say that in 1899 the Corporation of Blandford converted the pump into a drinking-fountain, and that the Blandford Waterworks Company, not halting in good deeds, gratuitously supplies the water.

The pilgrim who, arriving in Blandford hot, dusty and thirsty, and perhaps mindful of that alleged impossibility of buying a cup of genuine, essays to drink from the fountain, is at first surprised at the keen interest taken in his proceedings by a quickly collecting group of urchins. Their curiosity appears to be in the nature of surprise at the sight of a grown man drinking water, but light is shed upon

it when, pressing hard the obstinate knob that releases the fount, the thing suddenly gives way and squirts half a pint or so up his sleeve. This is a never-failing form of entertainment to the youth of Blandford, and a cheap one.

Not once, but several times has Blandford been destroyed by fire. It owed these disasters to the old Dorsetshire fashion of thatched roofs, and only in time, by dint of repeated happenings in this sort, learned wisdom. This light dawned at the time when the classic revival in architecture was flourishing, and thus, as already hinted, Blandford's High Street is wholly of that character. Classicism does not often make for beauty in English towns, but here the general effect is admirable, and although the stone of the fine church-tower—designed in the same taste—is of a jaundiced greenish-yellow hue, it is a noble feature.

Blandford's natives have sometimes won to a great deal more than local fame ; witness Alfred Stevens, the designer of the Wellington monument in St. Paul's Cathedral, who was born in 1817, in Salisbury Street, that back-doors coach-road entrance into the town already mentioned. Willowes, the unhappy husband of Barbara, of the House of Grebe, was a descendant of one of the old families of glass-painters of Shottsford mentioned in that story, and more particularly referred to by Aubrey, the antiquary, who says : "Before the Reformation, I believe there was no country or great town in England but had glasse painters. Old Harding of Blandford in Dorsetshire, where I went to schoole, was the only country glasse painter that ever I knew. Upon play daies I was wont to visit

BLANDFORD FORUM.

"Shottsford is Shottsford still: you can't victual your carcass there unless you've got money, and can't buy a cup of genuine there, whether or no."

his shop and furnaces. He dyed about 1643, aged about 83 or more." That craft has long since died out from the town.

A beautiful backward view of the town is obtained on leaving it, over the Town Bridge that spans the sluggish, lily-grown Stour, at the entrance to Lord Portman's noble park of Bryanstone. Here a dense overarching canopy of trees gives a grateful shade on summer days and frames the distant prospect whence the classic tower of the church grandly rises. The entrance-gates to the domain of Bryanstone are jealously kept locked and guarded, but there be ways of circumventing this churlish exclusiveness and of seeing the astonishingly beautiful scenery of the park, as the present writer has by chance discovered for himself. You, at the cost of some effort in hill-climbing, take the defences in the rear, and entering away back by the farmstead and workshops of the estate, come down by the finest of the scenery to those selfsame locked gates at these outskirts of Blandford, to observe and hear with some secret satisfaction the expressed horror of the lodge-keeper, only too anxious to let you out and be rid of you.

But, for the unenterprising, there is a sufficiently beautiful distant view of the park and of the new mansion from the Town Bridge. A former Lord Portman in 1780 employed James Wyatt to build him a classic mansion which remained until the rule of the present owner of the title, who demolished and replaced it with the fine mansion designed by Norman Shaw, R.A., and built in red brick and Portland stone.

CHAPTER VI

THE OLD COACH-ROAD : BLANDFORD TO DORCHESTER

FROM this point the old coach-road becomes astonishingly hilly, so that mere words cannot accurately portray it, and recourse must be had to the eloquent armoury of the printer's case to set it forth in any truly convincing manner. The series of semi-circular dumpling hills is not adequately to be shadowed forth by the aid of mere brackets—we must picture them thus :

and, to give some notion of the quality of the surface during the heats of summer, let a glaring white surface five inches deep in dust and powdered flint be imagined, the whole stirred up into a stifling halo of floating particles by the frequent passage of a flock of sheep. Such is the Exeter Road between Blandford and Dorchester in the merry months of summer.

Five miles of this bring us to the village of Winterborne Whitchurch, anciently referred to as " Album Monasterium " or " Blaunch Minster," situated in the stony bottom where the little stream called the Winterborne does not in summer flow across the road. John Wesley, grandfather of the

more famous John, the founder of Methodism, was vicar of this parish in 1658, and on the Restoration was dispossessed, when he took to a life of itinerant preaching amid the hills and dales of Dorsetshire, not altogether dissimilar from that of his celebrated grandson. Here, about 1540, was born George Turberville, the poet. To this succeeds, in less than another three miles, Milborne St. Andrew, on the less dried up Mill Bourne. This, the "Millpond St. Jude's" alluded to in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, is a pretty place, of an old-world coaching interest, reflected from its partly thatched "Royal Oak" inn and the post office, once the "White Hart," with the imposing effigy of a white hart still prominent on its cornice, in company with those of two foxes and a row of miniature cannon. Up along a byroad, past the feathery poplars that lend so feminine an air of beauty to the village, is the church, and then the Manor House Farm, once the residence of the Mansell Pleydells, who since the building of Whatcombe House, near by Winterborne Whitchurch, in 1758, have left this residence to farming. The red-brick pillars of the entrance-gates remain—partly ruined and standing foolishly, without a trace of the old carriage drive that once went between them—on the grass, surmounted still with sculptured displays of military trophies surrounding a cartouche bearing the lichened arms of the Pleydells, including an inescutcheon of pretence showing that before they allied themselves with a Mansell they married money with a Morton. It is a fine house, full of character, with unusually —and somewhat foreign-looking—high-pitched roof. Grand old trees lead up to it, and in the distance

one perceives a manorial pigeon-house, against the skyline. The old drive led round to the other side of the mansion, where it is divided from the meadows by a moatlike cut in the Mill Bourne, now, however, richer in mud than in water, and crossed by a brick bridge. We can picture Lady Constantine, the susceptible young and wealthy widow of the defunct Sir Blount, stealing at night

THE OLD MANOR-HOUSE, MILBORNE ST. ANDREW.
Original of the "Welland House" in "Two on a Tower."

over this bridge, to visit Swithin St. Cleeve, star-gazing in his lonely tower on the hilltop. In the garden, with its sundial, are pretty old-world box-edged flower-beds and shady arbours. Foundations of many demolished buildings are traceable in the meadows.

The scene of *Two on a Tower* is a selection from various places. "The tower," Mr. Hardy writes

to me, "had two or three originals—Horton, Charborough, etc." Those other places are duly described in these pages, but the "etc." covers the curious brick obelisk built on the summit of the earthwork-encircled hill near by this old manor-house of Milborne St. Andrew, and called Weatherbury Castle. Standing on this "fir-shrouded hilltop," one may see, for many miles around, summer conflagrations among the furze on Bere Heath,

WEATHERBURY CASTLE.

"Little can in these times be seen of the obelisk from without."

the tall tower in Charborough Park, which, much more than this obelisk, resembles Swithin's observatory, and, near at hand, below, this old manor-house, the "Welland House" of the story. From this eyrie, too, you perceive the old Exeter Road swooping whitely downhill, and hear the hum of threshing-machines, coming up, like the drowsy buzz of insects, from the vale.

It is not difficult to detect sarcasm in the description of this hill. It "was (according to some

THE OBELISK, WEATHERBURY CASTLE.

"The sob of the environing trees was here expressively manifest."

antiquaries) an old Roman camp—if it were not (as others insisted) an old British castle, or (as the rest swore) an old Saxon field of Witanagemote—with remains of an outer and an inner vallum, a winding path leading up between their overlapping ends by an easy ascent."

Not so easy, really—indeed, demanding a rather strenuous climb. And when you are on the crest of that ancient glacis (impregnable it might well have been when men fought hand to hand) it is with some difficulty you penetrate the dense woodland growing within this *ceinture*. Little can in these times be seen of the obelisk from without: only from one particular view-point can you observe its ultimate inches and the metal ball that caps it, rising mysteriously from amid the topmost branches of the fir-trees. Its situation is exactly described in the story: "The gloom and solitude which prevailed round the base were remarkable. The sob of the environing trees" (how like, by the way, to that passage in Mr. W. S. Gilbert's *Ruddigore*, "the sob of the breeze is heard in the trees") was here expressively manifest, and, moved by the light breeze, their thin straight stems rocked in seconds, like inverted pendulums, while some boughs and twigs rubbed the pillar's sides, or occasionally clicked in catching each other. Below the level of their summits the masonry was lichen-stained and mildewed, for the sun never pierced that moaning cloud of blue-black vegetation. Pads of moss grew in the joints of the stonework, and here and there shade-loving insects had engraved on the mortar patterns of no human style or meaning, but curious and suggestive."

The why or purpose of this slight brick structure are lost. The only clue, afforded by the inscription on a stone tablet set in the lichened bricks, points to it being the handiwork of a Pleydell. It was, in fact, built by Edmund Morton Pleydell, but his purpose, if indeed he had one beyond a singular notion of ornament, has passed, with himself, beyond these voices; and the neglected condition of the monument—if indeed it be a monument—fully bears out the moral reflection in *Two on a Tower*. "Here stood this aspiring piece of masonry, erected as the most conspicuous and ineffaceable reminder of a man that could be thought of; and yet the whole aspect of the memorial betokened forgetfulness. Probably not a dozen people within the district knew the name of the person commemorated, while perhaps not a soul remembered whether the column were hollow or solid, whether with or without a tablet explaining its date and purpose."

E. M. P.
1761

Regaining the high road and passing uphill by where the Dewlish toll-gate once stood, and by an up-and-down course infinitely varied as to gradient, we come at length down to the valley of the Piddle, and to Piddletown, the "Weatherbury" of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, where Gabriel Oak, come down in the world by the agency of Fate and his foolish young sheep-dog, took service with his distractingly elusive dear, Bathsheba Everdene, the lady-farmer. Weatherbury, as Mr. Hardy regretfully tells us, is not the Weatherbury he once knew. It has indeed been very largely rebuilt, and the rather stern and prim limestone cottages that stand

prominently in one of its several streets do not altogether prepossess one in favour of this village that is not quite a townlet and yet may quite possibly resent the more rustic definition. The "several" streets are, after all, rather roads, with rows of houses and cottages less integrally than incidentally there, and the several are perhaps reducible to a term less connotive of number ; but they run in unexpected directions and uncovenanted angles, and so make an imposing show, comparable with the effect produced by six supers who, by judicious stage-management in passing and repassing, can be made to represent an army. But the Piddle, running sparkling and clear through Piddletown, redeems the conjoined effect of those streets and gives the place a final and definitive *cachet* of rurality, by no means belied by the very large, though very rustic, church—happily still unrestored, and, with its tall pews and fine Jacobean carved oak choir-gallery, a perfect picture of an ancient Wessex place of worship. Hardean village choirs and Gabriel Oak's bass voice take, if it be possible, an even greater air of actuality to the pilgrim who enters here.

The interest of Piddletown church is added to by the fine and curious bowl font, diapered in an unusual pattern, and by the tombs of the Martins of Athelhampton, who lie mediævally recumbent in effigy in their own chapel, quite unconcerned, although scored over with the initials of the undistinguished, and although their old manor-house of Athelhampton, near by, on the road to Bere Regis, has since the time they became extinct passed through several alien hands. Poor old fellows ! Their somewhat threatening motto, under their old

PIDDLETOWN.

"The tower of Weatherbury Church was a square erection of fourteenth-century date."

monkey crest, of "He who looks at Martin's ape Martin's ape shall look at him!" has lost any point it ever had.

A touching epitaph desires your prayers for two of the family:

> Here lyeth the body of Xpofer Martyn Esquyer,
> Sone and heyre unto Syr Willym Martyn, knyght,
> Pray for there Soules with harty desyre
> That bothe may be sure of Eternall lyght;
> Calling to Remembraunce that ev'ry wyhgt
> Most nedys dye, and therefor lett us pray
> As other for us may do Another day.

This church of Piddletown, or "Weatherbury," is the scene of Sergeant Troy's belated remorse and of the acute misery of that incident where, coming by the light of a lantern and planting flowers on Fanny Robin's grave, he sleeps in the porch while the rain-storm breaks and the storm-water from the gurgoyles of the tower spouts furiously over the spot.

"The persistent torrent from the gurgoyle's jaws directed all its vengeance into the grave. The rich tawny mould was stirred into motion, and boiled like chocolate. The water accumulated and washed deeper down, and the roar of the pool thus formed spread into the night. . . . The flowers so carefully planted by Fanny's repentant lover began to move and writhe in their bed. The winter-violets turned slowly upside down, and became a mere mat of mud. Soon the snowdrops and other bulbs danced in the boiling mass like ingredients in a cauldron. Plants of the tufted species were loosened, rose to the surface, and floated off."

The street beside the church retains a good deal of its quaint features of thatch and plaster, with deep eaves where the house-martins build. A pretty corner including an old thatched house with architectonic windows closely resembling those of a Queen Anne bureau, and supported on pillars having a cousinship with classic art, is especially noticeable.

If we wish to see the old mansion that served

A QUAINT CORNER IN PIDDLETOWN.

as model for Bathsheba's farm, we shall not find it in Piddletown, but must turn aside and proceed up the valley of the Piddle, in the direction of Piddlehinton and Piddletrenthide—usually termed "Longpiddle." Before reaching these, at the distance of rather over a mile, we come to Lower Walterstone, where, behind noble groups of beeches, horse-chestnuts, and sycamores growing on raised

grassy banks, it will be found, in the shape of a Jacobean mansion eloquently portrayed by the novelist :

"By daylight, the bower of Oak's new-found mistress, Bathsheba Everdene, presented itself as a hoary building, of the Jacobean stage of Classic Renaissance as regards its architecture, and of a proportion which told at a glance that, as is so frequently the case, it had once been the manorial hall upon a small estate around it, now altogether effaced as a distinct property, and merged in the vast tract of a non-resident landlord which comprised several such modest demesnes. Fluted pilasters, worked from the solid stone, decorated its front, and above the roof pairs of chimneys were here and there linked by an arch, some gables and other unmanageable features still retaining traces of their Gothic extraction. Soft brown mosses, like faded velveteen, formed cushions upon the stone tiling, and tufts of the houseleek or sengreen sprouted from the eaves of the low surrounding buildings. A gravel walk leading from the door to the road in front was incrusted at the sides with more moss—here it was a silver-green variety, the nut-brown of the gravel being visible to the width of only a foot or two in the centre. This circumstance, and the generally sleepy air of the whole prospect here, together with the animated and contrasting state of the reverse façade, suggested to the imagination that, on the adaptation of the building for farming purposes, the vital principle of the house had turned round inside its body, to face the other way."

The way from Piddletown to Dorchester, passing

the hamlet singularly and interestingly named "Troy Town," which, although itself intrinsically without visible interest, invites speculation, presently passes over Yellowham Hill, clothed in luxuriant woods. This spot, the "Yalbury Hill" of Troy's excruciatingly pitiful meeting with Fanny Robin, figures, together with the woodlands—the "Yalbury

LOWER WALTERSTONE FARM: ORIGINAL OF BATHSHEBA'S FARM IN "FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD."

"A hoary building of the Jacobean stage of Classic Renaissance."

Great Wood" of *Under the Greenwood Tree*—in several others among the Wessex stories. Coming to it in old times, the coaches changed horses at the "Buck's Head" inn, now quite disestablished and forgot, save for the humorous description of it to be found in the pages of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Unswervingly the highway passes over its crest and down on the other side, the wayfarer along

it watched by bright-eyed squirrels and the other lesser fauna of this dense covert, while he thinks himself unobserved. It is a lovely road, but you should see it and its encompassing woods in autumn, when the October sunshine, with that characteristic golden sheen peculiar to the time of year, falls between the rich red trunks of the firs on to the golden-brown of the dried bracken ; when the acorns are ripe on the dwarf oaks and fall with startling little crashes into the sere leaves of the undergrowth ; when the nuts are ripe on the hazels and the squirrels—too busy now to follow the wayfarer's movements—are industriously all day long gathering store of them over against winter. Then Yellowham Woods are at their finest.

Where the descent from this eminence reaches an intermediate level, preparatory to diving again downwards, the road takes a curve through the park-lands of Kingston House, a stately but cold-looking mansion of stone, figuring in that first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, as "Knapwater House." The bias of the architect, as he then was, is prominently displayed in Mr. Hardy's description of it : "The house was regularly and substantially built of clean grey freestone throughout, in that plainer fashion of Greek classicism which prevailed at the latter end of the last century, when the copyists called designers had grown weary of fantastic variations in the Roman orders. The main block approximated to a square on the ground plan, having a projection in the centre of each side, surmounted by a pediment. From each angle of the north side ran a line of buildings lower than the rest, turning inwards again at their farthest end, and

forming within them a spacious open court, within which resounded an echo of astounding clearness. These erections were in their turn backed by ivy-covered ice-houses, laundries, and stables, the whole mass of subsidiary buildings being half buried beneath close-set shrubs and trees."

Leaving aside, for the present, an exploration of Stinsford, down the next turning, to come later to a particular and intimate discussion of it, we proceed to Dorchester, whose houses, and those of its allied suburb of Fordington, are now seen, crowning the ridge on which the old county town stands.

CHAPTER VII

DORCHESTER

DORCHESTER, the "Casterbridge" of the novels, stands upon or, more correctly, above, the River Frome, and from that circumstance derived its ancient Roman name of Durnovaria, whose Latinity Mr. Hardy has exploited in the name of "Durnover" he confers upon Fordington. The Romans themselves did by no means invent their name for the station they founded here, but just adapted the title given by the native tribe of Durotriges to their settlement. Those natives, who were of Welsh stock, styled their habitation by the sufficiently Welsh name of Dwrinwyr, which, like all Cymric place-names, was descriptive and alluded to its watery situation.

The approach to Dorchester has suffered in late years, in the pictorial point of view, from the decay and destruction of many of those magnificent old elms that once formed a noble introduction along this, the "London Road"; but it is not wholly to be bankrupted of beauty, for, although Dorchester may continue to grow, it is not in this direction that its suburbs will be thrown out. The flat water-meadows of the Frome forbid building operations here, and in effect say, at the bridge im-

mediately below where Fordington on its ridge stands on the thitherward bank of the stream—"thus far and no farther!" From this approach, looking to where Fordington's houses die away on the left hand, and to where the chalky downs begin to rise, you may obtain a distant view of the novelist's residence, a house he himself designed, standing beside the Wareham Road near where an old turnpike-gate stood, and called from it "Max Gate." Looking, however, straight ahead, the road into Dorchester is seen becoming a street and going with inflexible Roman directness through the town, with the ancient church tower of Fordington slightly to the left, and the equally ancient church of St. Peter's immediately in front, in the centre of the town, where the two main streets cross. Attendant modern churches and chapels, and the Town Hall, with spires, act as satellites. To the right hand, rising bulky from the huddled mass of houses, is a grey building which but a little experience of touring in England identifies without need of inquiry as the gaol.

Dorchester, figuring as the "Casterbridge" of that mayor whose surprising history is set forth in that powerful story, bulks large in the whole series of Wessex novels—as how could it fail of doing, seeing that the novelist himself was born at Upper Bockhampton, only three miles away? In masterly fashion he has described its salient points, as they were before modernity had come to obliterate them, or at least to take off the sharp edge of their singularity. He has expended much thought upon Roman Dorchester, and speculated upon what manner of place it was fifteen hundred years ago.

"Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had lain there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years." Nay, even within the precincts of his own garden, on the edge of the rotund upland that looks so wanly down upon the railway, relics of the legionaries have been discovered. Three of those stout warriors were there found. "Each body was fitted with, one may almost say, perfect accuracy into the oval hole, the crown of the head touching the maiden chalk at one end and the toes at the other, the tight-fitting situation being strongly suggestive of the chicken in the egg-shell."

More attuned to modern times is that description of Dorchester as it appeared when Susan, Henchard's wife, with Elizabeth-Jane, entered it from the London Road that evening. Wonderfully observed and true is that passage where the light of the street lamps, glimmering through those engirdling trees that were then, even more than now, the great feature of the town, is made a snug and comforting contrast with the outside country, seeming "strangely solitary and vacant in aspect, considering its nearness to life." Then the agricultural and pastoral pursuits of the people, as reflected in the character of the goods displayed in shop windows, is neatly shown, in a list of those objects: the hay-rakes, the seed-lips, butter-firkins, hoes and spades and mattocks; the horse-embrocations,

scythes reaping-hooks, and hedger's and ditcher's gloves, articles all of everyday requirement.

The "grizzled church" to which they came was St. Peter's, whose tower showed "how completely the mortar from the joints of the stonework had been nibbled out by time and weather, which had planted in the crevices thus made little tufts of stone-crop and grass, almost as far up as the very battlements." Yes, and so one vividly remembers it; but restoration has recently made away with all these evidences of age, and cleaned the stonework and renewed and pointed it, greatly to the aid of the tower's structural stability, 'tis true, but the very death of picturesque effect. There is a pleasing thing here, at the foot of this tower, where High East Street and High West Street join. It is the bronze life-sized statue, in his habit as he lived, of "Pa'son Barnes," otherwise the Reverend William Barnes, the Dorset poet, described by Thomas Hardy as he is represented here—"an aged clergyman, quaintly attired in caped cloak, knee-breeches and buckled shoes, with a leather satchel slung over his shoulders and a stout staff in his hand." This quaint figure, whose life and thoughts and writings were racy of the soil whence he sprang—he was born in the Vale of Blackmore—was for many years a quite inadequately rewarded schoolmaster, and only late in life was given, first the living of Whitcomb, and then that of Winterborne Came, near Dorchester. His poems in the Dorsetshire vernacular, long known and admired, were not pecuniarily successful. "What a mockery is life!" said he. "They praise me, and take away my bread! They may be putting up a statue to me

some day, when I am dead, while all I want now is leave to live. I asked for bread, and they gave me a stone!"

Prophetic indeed! for here is the statue, with beneath it the inscription:

WILLIAM BARNES
1801—1886

and the quotation from one of his own folk-poems:

Zoo now I hope his kindly fëace
Is gone to vind a better plëace,
But still wi' vo'k a' left behind
He'll always be a kept in mind.

The mural monument of a sixteenth-century Thomas Hardy, within the church, attracts attention. The inscription states him to have been "esquire" and of Melcombe Regis, and goes on to describe his benefactions to the town and the gratitude of the "Baylives and Burgisses" therefor. To "commend to posterity an example soe worthy of imitation," they erected this tablet. He is said to be the common ancestor of Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy, the friend and comrade of Nelson, and of Thomas Hardy, the novelist.

Still from this tower of St. Peter's sounds the curfew chime, with the stroke of eight o'clock every evening, as described in the story; its "peremptory clang" the signal for shop-shutting throughout the town. "Other clocks struck eight from time to time—one gloomily from the gaol, another from the gable of an alms-house, with a preparative creak of machinery more audible than the note of the bell."

In High East Street stands, just as described, the principal inn—I suppose in these times one should, for fear of disrespect say "hotel"—of Dorchester, the "King's Arms," white-faced, with the selfsame "spacious bow-window projected into the street over the main portico," the whole not too imposing for comfort, and not too homely for dignity. It was a coaching house in days gone by. From a step above the pavement on the opposite side of the street Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, amid the crowd, witnessed the dinner given to the mayor, and through the archway Boldwood carried Bathsheba, fainting at the news of her husband's death.

Equally white-faced, but a good deal more picturesque, is the "White Hart," down at the end, or the beginning if you will, of the sloping street, as you enter the town. By it runs the Frome, and in its courtyard on market-days may be seen such a concourse of carriers' carts as rarely witnessed nowadays. Dorchester is a busy carrying centre, by no means spoiled in that respect by railways, which yet fail to reach many of its surrounding villages.

The brick bridge that here spans the Frome, and the stone bridge some distance farther away, spanning a branch of the same stream out away in the meads, have their parts in the *Mayor of Casterbridge*. "These bridges had speaking countenances. Every projection in each was worn down to obtuseness, partly by weather, more by friction from generations of loungers, whose toes and heels had from year to year made restless movements against these parapets, as they had stood there, meditating on the aspect of affairs. In the case

of the more pliable bricks and stones, even the flat faces were worn into hollows by the same mixed mechanism. The masonry of the top was clamped with iron at each joint; since it had been no uncommon thing for desperate men to wrench the coping off and throw it down into the river, in reckless defiance of the magistrates. For to this pair of bridges gravitated all the failures of the town—those who had failed in business, in love, in sobriety, in crime. Why the unhappy hereabout usually chose the bridges for their meditations in preference to a railing, a gate, or a stile, was not so clear." He goes on to tell how there was a marked difference in quality between the frequenters of the near bridge of brick and the far one of stone. The more thoroughgoing failures and those with the most threadbare characters, or with no characters at all, save bad ones, preferred the near bridge: to reach it entailed less trouble, and it was not for such as them to mind the glare of publicity.

"The *misérables* who would pause on the remoter bridge were of a politer stamp. They included bankrupts, hypochondriacs, persons who were what is called 'out of a situation' from fault or lucklessness, the inefficient of the professional class—shabby-genteel men, who did not know how to get rid of the weary time between breakfast and dinner, and the yet more weary time between dinner and dark." These unfortunates gazed steadily into the river, never turning to notice passers-by, and indeed shrinking from observation. And so day by day they looked and looked in the stream, until at last their bodies were sometimes found in it.

TEN HATCHES, DORCHESTER.

"The wanderer in this direction, who should stand still for a few moments on a quiet night, might hear singular symphonies from these waters."

When Henchard's ruin was complete, he too began to frequent the stone bridge, and would have ended in the same way, not at the bridge itself, but over in the meadows where the many branches of the Frome are regulated and controlled by a number of sluices known as Ten Hatches. "To the east of Casterbridge lay moors and meadows, through which much water flowed. The wanderer in this direction, who should stand still for a few moments on a quiet night, might hear singular symphonies from these waters, as from a lampless orchestra, all playing in their sundry tones, from near and far parts of the moor. At a hole in a rotten weir they executed a recitative; where a tributary brook fell over a stone breastwork they trilled cheerily; under an arch they performed a metallic cymballing; and at Durnover Weir they hissed. The spot at which their instrumentation rose loudest was a place called Ten Hatches, whence during high springs there proceeded a very fugue of sounds."

The ruined mayor, to whom, and not the cold, successful Donald Farfrae, the reader's sympathies go out, would have ended all his troubles here with a plunge in the waters, had it not been for the ghastly floating Skimmington effigy of himself he saw floating down the current as he was about to drop in.

"Gray's Bridge," as the stone structure on the London Road is known, is that toward which Bob Loveday, in the *Trumpet Major*, gazed anxiously, awaiting the coach bearing his Matilda, and across it, of course, on their way to Longpiddle, went those "Crusted Characters," telling stories in the carrier's

cart jogging along with them so comfortably from the "White Hart."

The fateful, almost sentient, character many natural objects are made to assume in the march of Mr. Hardy's tragic stories is expressly shown in his description of the Roman amphitheatre of Maumbury, at the farther or western extremity of Dorchester, beside the road to Weymouth. He styles it "the Ring, on the Budmouth Road," and explains how "it was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude." It is not, as might be gathered from this passage, a building, like the Coliseum, but a vast amphitheatre formed by earthworks. Used by the Romans as the scene of their gladiatorial displays, it has doubtless witnessed many an act of savage cruelty, but is now a solitude. A sinister place it has been always, for, when executions were public affairs, the gallows stood within the old arena; and until well into the eighteenth century the populace came to it in thousands to witness the execution of felons where, before the dawn of the Christian era, fighting men had struggled to the death: where perhaps, in early Christian times, in the days of the Diocletian persecution, Christians had been sacrificed. It was here, in 1705, that Mary Channing was executed, under the most fearful circumstances of barbarity belonging to the penalties prescribed for *petit treason*. The crimes known by that name included several forms of rebellion against authority, among them the murder of a husband by a wife. A husband being then, much more than now, in the eyes of the law in a position of authority over his wife, to murder

him was not merely murder—it was *petit treason* as well, and therefore deserving of exceptional punishment. Mary Brookes, married by the wish of her parents, against her own inclination, to one Richard Channing of Dorchester, a grocer, almost ruined him by her extravagance, and then poisoned him by giving him white mercury, first in rice-milk, and twice afterwards in a glass of wine. At the Summer Assizes, 1704, she was found guilty and condemned to death. On March 21st, 1705, accordingly, she was strangled here, in this arena, and then burned, the horrible spectacle being witnessed by ten thousand persons. She was but nineteen years of age. This Golgotha was disestablished in 1767, when the gallows was removed to the decent solitudes of Bradford Down, a mile and a half along the Exeter Road, on the way to Bridport. It was to this spot that a mayor of Dorchester desired to escort a distinguished traveller leaving the town, after being presented with the customary address. "May I be allowed to accompany your Highness as far as the gallows?" he asked, greatly to the dismay of that departing Serenity, to whom the allusion seemed more ill-omened than really it was. It is a tale told of many places and many mayors, and he would be a clever commentator who should distinguish the real original.

The lone amphitheatre of Maumbury has thus, it will be seen, real tragical associations fitting it for the novelist's more sombre humours. He tells how intrigues were there carried forward, how furtive and sinister meetings happened within the rim of these ancient earthworks, and how, although

the patching up of long-standing feuds might be attempted on this spot, seldom had it been the place of meeting of happy lovers. In this ring, then, the reconciliation of Susan and Henchard took place, after eighteen years, and was but the prelude to miseries and disasters.

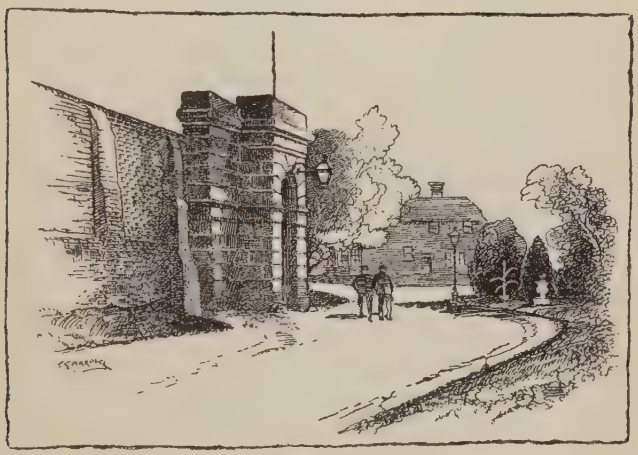
CHAPTER VIII

DORCHESTER (*continued*)

HENCHARD'S house—"one of the best, faced with dull red-and-grey old brick," there are many such here—was in the neighbourhood of North Street, and not far from that Corn Exchange where Bathsheba was wont, on market days, to mingle with the burly farmers and corn-factors, like a yacht among ironclads, displaying for inspection the sample wheat in her outstretched palm.

Down here, too, is the gaol, whose mass is seen from the meads on approaching the town. It has been much altered, but the heavy stone gateway, together with the flanking walls of red brick, is very much as of old. Happily, such things as are noticed in that gruesome short story, *The Withered Arm*, are things only of dreadful memory. At that time the populace of Dorchester were accustomed to wait below in the meadows, eager to witness the executioner, the criminals—murderers, burglars, rick-firers, sheep and horse-stealers, even down to those convicted of petty larceny—being capitally condemned and hanged as high as, possibly indeed higher than, Haman, whose place of suspension is notoriously and traditionally lofty. Gertrude Lodge, coming here for the cure of her withered arm by

the agency of the dead man's touch, observed, as all could then not help observing, those "three rectangular lines against the sky," which indicated the coming execution and the morrow's exhibition, to be followed by the merry-makings of Hang Fair. When she enquired the hour of execution, she was told: "The same as usual—twelve o'clock, or as soon after as the London mail-coach gets in. We always wait for that, in case of a reprieve."



DORCHESTER GAOL.

In Dorchester Gaol—we have no space here for those merely actual persons of flesh and blood who have been incarcerated, or who have suffered in it—those more real characters of fiction, Boldwood and Marston were confined; and hence the Shottsford watchmaker of *The Three Strangers*, lying under sentence of death, escaped along the downs to Higher Crowstairs, where, while sheltering in the

ingle-nook of the cottage, two other strangers, one of them the hangman deputed to execute the demands of the law upon him on the morrow, take shelter from the weather.

To follow this gloomy train a little longer, the veritable Hangman's Cottage, home of this erstwhile busy functionary, at a time when Dorchester demanded the whole time and energies of a Jack Ketch, and not a very occasional visit from one common to the whole kingdom, may be seen, at the foot of Glydepath Lane, in a fine damp situation near the river. It is one of a tiny group of heavily thatched old rustic cottages built of grouted flint and chalk, faced and patched with red brick, and held together with iron ties, so that in their old age they shall not, some night, altogether collapse and deposit their inhabitants among the potatoes, the peas, and cabbages of their fertile gardens. Dorchester paid its hangman a regular salary, and in the intervals between his more important business, he was under engagement to perform those minor punishments of whipping and scourging, of putting in the stocks, and of pillorying, by whose plentiful administration Old England was made the "Merry England" of our forefathers. Let not the reader, however, seek a covert satire here. It is not to be gainsaid that it was a "Merry England," for the times were so brutal that, in all such degrading and pitiful spectacles as these, the populace took the keenest delight. Sufficient for the day—! and those who made merry did not stop to consider that they who were now spectators might soon very likely afford in their own persons the same spectacle.

Miserable times! Proof of them, do you need

seek it, is to be found in the Dorchester Museum, where the leaden weights, boldly inscribed "MERCY," are pointed out as the contribution, years ago, of an exceptionally tender-hearted governor of the gaol to a more pitiful method of ending the condemned man

THE HANGMAN'S COTTAGE, DORCHESTER.
"In a fine damp situation, near the river."

who was to die for his crime of arson. The man was of unusually light weight, and, as those were the times when men really were slowly and painfully hanged and choked by degrees, before criminals were given a drop and their necks broken, it was thought a kindly thing on the part of this governor that he

should have provided these heavy weights, to attach to this particular victim's feet and so help to shorten his misery.

This museum it was that Lucetta, keen to get the girl out of the way, suggested for Elizabeth Jane's entertainment; with affected enthusiasm and a good deal of veiled womanly sarcasm at the expense of antiquities, describing how it contained "crowds of interesting things—skeletons, teeth, old pots and pans, ancient boots and shoes, birds' eggs—all charmingly instructive."

But enough of such things, let us to other quarters.

Looking on to the cheerful and prosperous South Street from the corner of Durngate Street is the substantial "grey façade" of Lucetta's house, where lived Henchard's lady-love, whose affections were so readily transferable. The lower portion of this, the "High Place Hall" of the story, has suffered a transformation into business premises, but the resounding alleyways of Durngate Street and neighbouring lanes are as gloomy as those spots are described. "At night the forms of passengers were patterned by the lamps in black shadows upon the pale walls," and so they are still.

But the description of Lucetta's house in those pages is a composite picture; a good deal of it deriving from an old mansion in another part of the town. This will be found by taking a narrow thoroughfare leading out of the north side of High West Street, and called, in different parts of its course, Glydepath Lane and Glydepath Street. In this quiet byway is the early eighteenth-century mansion known as Colyton House, sometime a town

residence of the Churchill family, and so named from the little Devonshire town of Colyton, near which is situated Ash, that old dwelling, now a farmhouse, whence the historic Churchills sprang.

Readily to be seen, in a blank wall, is the long-filled-in archway, with the dreadful keystone mask, alluded to in the pages of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. "Originally the mask had exhibited a comic leer,

COLYTON HOUSE, DORCHESTER.
"Sometime a town residence of the Churchill family."

as could still be discerned; but generations of Casterbridge boys had thrown stones at the mask, aiming at its open mouth; and the blows thereof had chipped off the lips and jaws as if they had been eaten away by disease." Its appearance is indeed of a ghastly leprous nature, infinitely shuddery.

At this end of the town, out upon the Charminster road is the great Roman encampment of Poundbury, or, locally, "Pummery," where Henchard spread

that feast, deserted by those for whom it was intended, in favour of the rival entertainment in the West Walks, prepared by the hateful Farfrae, that paragon of all the business and higher virtues, whom the reader perversely, but not unnaturally, detests. "Roman" it has been in this last passage declared, but, in truth, its origin has been as widely disputed as that of Weatherbury Castle, where the varying theories arouse Mr. Hardy's sarcasm so markedly. It lies without the site of the Roman walls of Durnovaria, and probably formed some advanced outpost or great camp in the long years of the Roman occupation of Britain, before the establishment of security and the growth of their towns. Those Roman walls are now for the most part gone and their sites were long ago planted with avenues, now growing aged and past their prime, and ceased to be that clean-cut barrier between *urbs* and *rure* they formed of old, when Dorchester of pre-railway days had not grown too big for that girdle the Romans had set about her: a girdle not too constrictive for the needs of the Middle Age, nor even in the eighteenth century with any suspicion of tight-lacing, but all too compressive soon after the coaches had given way to trains, and steel rails and steam along them had sent up the birth-rate. A notable passage in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* tells how there were not, quite a little while ago, any suburbs here, in the modern sense, nor any gradual fusion of town and country. "The farmer's boy could sit under his barleymow, and pitch a stone into the window of the town-clerk; reapers at work among the sheaves nodded to acquaintances standing on the pavement-corner; the red-robed judge, when

he condemned a sheep stealer, pronounced sentence to the tune of 'Baa,' that floated in at the window from the remainder of the flock browsing hard by."

But those bounds have in several places been leaped, and, in especial where the South Walk runs, modern villas have redly replaced the golden grain or the green pastures. Changed manners and customs have brought about this alteration, quite as much as increased population. The four old traditional streets of the town, together with their more immediate offshoots, have been resigned more exclusively to business than of yore, and made less a residence. The butchers, the bakers, the candlestick-makers, who would once have scorned to live anywhere else than over "the shop," will now not very often condescend to make their homes in the upper stages of their "stores" or "establishments," or by what other pretty names modern finesse elects to describe shops and counters and tills and such like things by which tradespeople become rich.

And, by that same token, the business premises thus deserted for snug suburban villas, are themselves changing. One could never, in modern times, have strictly called Dorchester generally picturesque, in the prominent circumstances of those four main streets: repeated conflagrations that destroyed most of the really old and interesting houses forbade that, and replaced thatch and barge-boarded gables with plain brick fronts, severe in unornamental rectangular windows, and ending on the skyline with unimaginative straight copings. But the latest manifestations of these times, when they say business is a struggle and all trades alike carried on less for the profit of the purveyor, than for the good of

the purchaser, are expensive carved stone and brick frontages, with good artistic features. As art in this country only spells much expenditure of good money and as building operations are always costly, it is a little difficult to square all these developments with the talk of "hard times." South Street, in especial, is being grandly transformed, and "Napper's Mite," the crouching row of almshouses, built from the benefaction of the good Sir Robert Napper, in 1615, made to look additionally humble by newly risen tall buildings. But the town authorities have not yet removed the old rusticated stone obelisk that stands in Cornhill, in the centre of the town, where High East and High West Streets, and North and South Streets meet. It serves the multum-in-parvo purposes of a pump, a lamp-standard, and a leaning-stock for Dorchester's weary or born-tired, and is moreover a landmark. But the two dumpy little houses at the corner, which were properly dumpy and humble and—so to speak—knew their place, and abased themselves in the presence of their betters—that is to say, in the contiguity of St. Peter's across the road—have been rebuilt, with the result that their tall upstanding pretentiousness detracts not a little from the height of that "grizzled tower."

And so, turning to the left at this corner, we leave Dorchester for Bridport, along High West Street, the quietest of all these thoroughfares, and looking rather "out of it," and somewhat glad of that fact, in a dignified, exclusive way, typified by its aristocratic old houses, and its old County Hall. It is true there are a few shops in High Street, but they are by no means pushful shops. They

never make "alarming sacrifices," nor sell off. Indeed, were I not fearful of offending susceptibility, I might declare a belief that they never sell anything at all, and are kept by "grown-ups," not grown tired of playing at shops when they did so arrive at years supposed to be those of discretion. Here is a quiet shop—where they will doubtless sell you something, if you really enter and firmly insist upon it—occupying one of the few really old and picturesque houses in the main thoroughfare; it is the house "by tradition" occupied by the infamous Judge Jeffreys, when visiting Dorchester on the business of that special occasion, the Bloody Assize, holden to try the unhappy wretches arraigned for their part in Monmouth's Rebellion of 1685. The old house bears an inscription to this effect. Over three hundred prisoners faced the judge at that awful time, and two hundred and ninety received sentence of death. Of these the number actually executed was seventy-four, and, as the old gossip at the "Three Mariners" tells, portions of their bodies were gibbeted in various parts of the county, "different j'ints sent about the country like butcher's meat."

And so we leave Dorchester and its, on the whole, grim memories, along an avenue, fellow to that by which the town was entered.

CHAPTER IX

SWANAGE

THE name of Swanage shares with that of Swansea, the honour of being, perhaps, the most poetic that any seaside resort ever owned. It is a corruption of the Danish name of "Swanic," or "Swanwich," and there seems to be no reason to doubt—although there exists a school of antiquarians sceptical enough to doubt it—that the place was then, as its name indicates, a place of swans. Your modern antiquary, disgusted at the childish legends once everywhere accepted as sober historical facts, rushes to the other extreme, and, although a thing be obvious, will not allow its obviousness, unless supported by documentary or other tangible evidence. He must needs disregard the self-evident, and delve deeply and unavailingly in attempts to prove that "things are not what they seem."

Conjectures that there was at that time a royal swannery here are based upon the known fondness of royal personages for preserving that bird, once thought a table delicacy, and upon the existence from ancient times of the famous Abbotsbury swannery, along this same coast. But it is needless here to labour the point; and although the little stream, more and more pollutedly with every year

of the extension of modern Swanage, still flows down into the sea under the name of the Swan Brook, the argument supported by it in favour of the obvious origin of the place-name shall be no further pursued.

But the surrounding quarries have for many centuries past given a very different character to Swanage than that of a village with a marshy creek inhabited by swans. Few places ever proclaimed the industries by which they lived more prominently than did this little port, until well within recent recollection. A colliery town no more insistently obtrudes the circumstances by which it earns its livelihood than Swanage displayed evidences of its cleanly trade and craft of stone-working and stone-exporting.

The varieties of stone from the quarries to the rear of Swanage are among the most famous building and decorative stones in the world ; for here we are at the gates of Isle of Purbeck, where, not only the oolitic limestone of the same nature as "Portland stone" is quarried, but that (to antiquaries at least) far more generally known material, "Purbeck marble," as well. No ancient church or cathedral of any considerable size or elaboration was considered complete without shafts and font and other decorative features of Purbeck marble, sometimes polished, at other times left in its native state ; and thus, from very early times until the beginning of the sixteenth century, when more strikingly coloured and patterned foreign marbles began to find their way into England, Swanage in particular, and Purbeck in general, enjoyed an amazing prosperity.

Swanage in Mr. Hardy's pages is "Knollsea," and is described in *The Hand of Ethelberta* as a village :—"Knollsea," we learn, "was a seaside village lying snug within two headlands, as between a finger and thumb." A very true simile, as a glance on the map, upon the configuration of Swanage Bay, will satisfy those curious in the exactness or otherwise of literary images. But time has very rapidly vitiated the justness of what follows :—"Everybody in the parish who was not a boatman was a quarrier, unless he were the gentleman who owned half the property and had been a quarryman, or the other gentleman who owned the other half and had been to sea."

"The knowledge of the inhabitants was of the same special sort as their pursuits. The quarrymen in white fustian understood practical geology, the laws and accidents of dips, faults, and cleavage, far better than the ways of the world and mammon ; the seafaring men, in Guernsey frocks, had a clearer notion of Alexandria, Constantinople, the Cape, and the Indies than of any inland town in their own own country. This, for them, consisted of a busy portion, the Channel, where they lived and laboured, and a dull portion, the vague unexplored miles of interior at the back of the ports, which they seldom thought of."

This charming picture of an out-of-the world place remained, very little blurred by change, until well on into the '80's of the nineteenth century, when it occurred to exploiting railway folk that the time was ripe for the construction of a branch railway from Wareham. With the opening of that line the primitive houses, and the equally

primitive people who lived in them, suffered a change almost as sudden and complete as though a harlequin had waved his wand over their heads.

There was indeed something exceptionally primitive in the Swanage people. They were chiefly quarrymen, and like all quarry folk, mining the great blocks of stone from mother earth, a strangely reserved and isolated race. A man who, felling timber, might conceivably remain all his life mentally detached from his occupation, following it only mechanically, could not long in these quarries, rich in the embalmed stoniness of myriads of humble creatures living in the palæozoic age, remain unaffected by his surroundings. An imaginative man might, not inaptly, conceive himself as a phenomenally gigantic giant working in some vast petrified graveyard among the petrifactions of a world infinitely little ; and, as the dyer's hand is subdued to the dye he works in, and—a less classic allusion—as the photographer acquires a permanent stain from his collodion, he could scarce escape the almost inevitable mental twist resulting from the surroundings.

And as they were, and in some measure still are, individually peculiar, so collectively they retain their exclusiveness. Still, with every recurrent Shrove Tuesday, their guild meets at Corfe, under the presidency of warden and steward ; and even in these days it is not open for an outsider to become a Purbeck quarryman. It is an industry only to be followed by patrimony and by due admission into its membership in the prescribed manner, which is that of appearing at the annual court with a penny loaf in one hand, a pot of beer in the other, and a

sum of six shillings and eightpence in the pocket, ready to be duly paid down.

With all the changes that have overtaken Swanage, who knows nowadays, save very old folk, that Swanage people are, or were, locally "Swanage Turks"? When—outside Swanage, of course—you asked why so named, you were apt to be told "Tarks, we al'us carls 'em, 'cos they don't know nawthen about anything." The informant in this particular instance was a Poole man. None could possibly have brought this charge of comprehensive and thorough-going ignorance against the natives of Poole, for that ancient port was a sink of iniquity, and inhabited, if we are to believe the history books—which there is no reason we should not do—by ruffians who were by no means unspotted of the world, but had plumbed the depths of every wickedness. Since Swanage has become the terminus of a branch railway and become a seaside resort, its "Turks" have acquired a very considerable amount of worldly wisdom, and can argue and chop logic with you, as well as the best.

To those who knew and loved old Swanage, the change that has come with its tardy accessibility by rail is woeful, but to those who have not so known and loved, I daresay it seems, by contrast with Bournemouth, a place strangely undeveloped. The trouble with the first-named is that development has been all too rapid, and has utterly robbed Swanage of its immemorial character as the port whence the famous Purbeck stone was shipped. Alas! pretentious houses of a tall and terrible ugliness now stand in the middle of the bay, on the shore immediately in front of what used merely by

courtesy to be called "the town," but is now actually grown to that status. The "bankers"—rows upon rows of stacked slabs of Purbeck stone that used to form so striking a feature of the shore, and were wont, to a stranger seeing them first on a moonlit night, to look so grisly, as though this were some close-packed seashore cemetery—the

THE OLD CHURCH, SWANAGE.
"The ancient church, whose tower is thought to be Saxon."

bankers, I say are gone, and in their stead—it is a circumstance of facetious irony—the grown prosperity of Swanage has built banks, where the Swanage tradesfolk doubtless deposit heavily from the profits of their summer trading.

In the distance, along the curving shore of Swanage Bay, there has arisen with the development of the Durlstone estate, a grand hotel, and in the

town itself—the folly of it !—uninteresting modern commercial buildings have replaced the quaint old cottages that, built as they were, in a peculiarly local fashion, with great stone slabs and rude stone tiling, had their like nowhere else. Now, the rows of newly arisen streets are such as have their counterparts in every town, and you can dine *à la carte* or *table-d'hôte* at the many hotels and boarding-houses, as their announcements boldly inform the visitor, quite as elaborately as in great cities. All, without doubt, very refined and up to date, but perhaps not to all of us, who keep the simple and robustious appetites of our beginnings, so pleasing a change from the time (of which Kingsley speaks) when a simple glass of ale and a crust of bread and cheese at a rustic inn was all one wished, and certainly all one could have got.

Of those times there are but little "islands," so to speak, left in the surging mass of modern brick and stone. One of them is the ancient church, whose tower is thought to be Saxon—the church where Ethelberta Petherwin, in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, marries Lord Mountclere. Another, tucked away behind the Town Hall, and only to be with some difficulty discovered, is the old village lock-up. No dread Bastille this, but an affair resembling a stone tool-house, twelve feet by eight, and lighted only by the holes in the decaying woodwork of its nail-studded door. It was built in 1803, "erected" as the old inscription tells us, "for the prevention of Wickedness and Vice by the Friends of Religion and Good Order." The inference to be drawn from the small size of this place of incarceration is that the "Wickedness and Vice" of Swanage were

on a very insignificant scale. Although Swanage has grown so greatly, and now owns a very fine and large police-station, it is not to be inferred that the delinquincies have increased in proportion, but rather that officialism has made a larger growth, and and that Swanage, like poor old England in general, is over-governed.

Among other outstanding features of Swanage, conferred upon it by the late Mr. Mowlem, of the London contracting firm of Mowlem and Burt, is the Wellington Clock Tower, the Gothic pinnacled structure now ornamenting the foreshore, in what were once the private gardens of "the Grove." But "the Grove" has now, like many another seashore estate, been cut up, and new villas now take the place of the older exclusiveness.

The Clock Tower, one of the many memorials to the great Duke of Wellington, stood, until about 1860, on the south side of London Bridge, but was removed when the roadway was widened at that point. Once removed, the good folk of Southwark were at a loss what to do with it, and so solved their difficulty by presenting its stones to Mr. Mowlem, the contractor. They thought he had been saddled with a "white elephant," and chuckled accordingly; but they little knew their man. He considered the relic "just the thing" for his native town of Swanage, and accepting it with the greatest alacrity, despatched it hither, and presented it to his friend Mr. Docwra, of "the Grove." This poor old monument to martial glory has suffered of late, for its pinnacle has been blown down and replaced by a copper sheathing very like a dish-cover.

CHAPTER X

SWANAGE TO CORFE CASTLE

That pilgrim who, whether on foot or by cycle, shall elect to trace these landmarks, will find the road out of Swanage to Corfe, by way of Langton Matravers and Kingston a heart-breaking stretch of stony hills, whose blinding glare under a summer sun is provocative of ophthalmia, and whose severities of stone walling, in place of green hedges, recall the scenery of Ireland. Herston, too, the unlovely outskirt of Swanage, is not encouraging. But the world—it is a truism—is made up of all sorts, and here, as elsewhere, rewards come after trials.

Langton Matravers, on the ridge-road, is, just as one might suppose from the stony nature of Purbeck, a village of stone houses, and very grim and unornamental ones too. Nine hundred souls live here, and so long as the "Langton freestone" won from its quarries is in good demand, are happy enough, although subject to every extremity of weather. The "Matravers" in the place-name derives from the old manorial lords, the Maltravers family, who dropped the "l" out of their name some time after one of their race, deeply implicated in the barbarous murder of Edward II., proved himself a very "bad Travers" indeed, and so made his name peculiarly descriptive.

Passing Gallows Gore Cottages—what a melodramatic address to own!—we come to Kingston village, along just such a road, with just such a view as that described in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, although, to be sure, she went, on that donkey-ride to Corfe, by another and very roundabout route, through Ulwell Gap, over Nine Barrow Down. Ordinary folk would have gone by the ordinary road; but then, you see, Ethelberta was a poetess, and "unconventionality—almost eccentricity—was *de rigueur*" for such an one. Hence also that unconventional, and uncomfortable, seat on the donkey's back.

From this point Corfe Castle is exquisitely seen, down below the ridge, but situated on the course of the minor, but still mighty, backbone that bisects the Isle. From hence, too, the country may be seen spread out like a map, "domains behind domains, parishes by the score, harbours, fir-woods and little inland seas mixing curiously together." Dipping down out of sight of all these distant Lands of Promise, among the richly wooded lanes of Kingston, the glaring limestone road is exchanged for shaded ways, where sunlight only filters through in patches of gold, looking to the imaginative as though some giant had come this way and dropped the contents of his money-bags. Thatched cottages, tall elms, and old-fashioned roadside gardens are the features of Kingston; but above all these, geographically and in every other respect, is the great and magnificent modern church built for Lord Eldon and completed in 1880, after seven years' work and a vast amount of money had been expended upon it. It was designed by Street—that same "obliterator of historic records"—who at Fawley

Magna earned Mr. Hardy's satire; but here were no records to obliterate. Certain reminiscences of the architect's early studies of the early Gothic of the Rhine churches may be traced here, in the exterior design of the apsidal chancel, strongly resembling that of Fawley, but one would hesitate to apply the opprobrious term of "German-Gothic" to this, as a whole. Its intention is Early English, but the general effect is rather of a Norman spirit informed with Early English details; an effect greatly accentuated by the heaviness and bulk of the central tower, intended by Lord Eldon to be a prominent landmark, and fulfilling that intention by the sacrifice of proportion to the rest of the building. Cruciform plan, size, and general elaboration render this a church particularly unfitted for so small and so rustic a village. Had its needs been studied, rather than the ecclesiological tastes of the third Lord Eldon, the little church built many years ago for the first earl, the great lawyer-lord, by Repton, would have sufficed; although to be sure it has all the faults of the first attempts at reviving Gothic.

The Earl of Eldon purchased the manor of Kingston and the residence of Encombe from William Morton Pitt in 1807. Here, in that little church built by him, he lies, beside his "Bessie," that Bessie Surtees with whom he, then plain and penniless John Scott, eloped from the old house on Sandhill, Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1772. His house of Encombe, the "Enkworth Court," of *The Hand of Ethelberta*, lies deep down in the glen of Encombe, approached by a long road gradually descending into the cup-like crater by the only expedient of

winding round it. Think of all the beautiful road scenery you have ever seen or heard of, and you

ENCOMBE.
"A house in which Pugin would have torn his hair."

will not have seen or been told of anything more beautiful in its especial kind of beauty than this sequestered road down into Lord Eldon's retreat.

Jagged white cliffs here and there project themselves out of the steep banks of grass and moss above the way, draped with a profusion of small-leaved ground-ivy and a wealth of hart's-tongue ferns, and trees romantically shade the whole. An obelisk erected by the great statesman, on a bold bluff, to the memory of his brother, Lord Stowell, adds an element of romance to the scene, and then, plunging into a final mass of tangled woodland, the grey stone elevation of the house is seen, ghostlike, fronting a gravel drive, in its silence and drawn blinds looking less like the home of some fairy princess than the residence of a misanthrope, who has retired beyond the reach of the world and drawn his blinds, with the hope of persuading any who may possibly find their way here that he is not at home.

"Enkworth Court" was, we are told, "a house in which Pugin would have torn his hair," and Encombe certainly can possess no charms for amateurs of Gothic. Nor can it possibly delight students of the ancient Greek and Roman orders, for its architecture has classic intentions without being classical, and heaviness without dignity. But its interior, if it likewise does not appeal to a cultivated taste in matters connected with the mother of all the arts, is exceptionally comfortable. Here the old Chancellor, over eighty years of age, spent most of his declining days. "His sporting days were over; he had but little interest in gardening or farming; and his only reading, beside the newspaper, was a chapter in the Bible. His mornings he spent in an elbow-chair by the fireside in his study—called his *shop*—which was ornamented

by portraits of his deceased master, George III. and his living companion, Pincher, a poodle dog."

From Kingston to Corfe Castle, the bourne of innumerable summer visitors, is two miles. The first glimpse of town and castle is one which clearly shows how aptly the site of them obtained its original name of Corvesgate, from the Anglo-Saxon *ceorfan*, to cut. The site was so named long before castle or town were erected here, and referred to the passages cut or carved through the bold range of hills by the little river Corfe and its tributaries. Those clefts are clearly distinguished from here and from the main road between Corfe and Swanage, and are notched twice, so deeply into the stony range, that the eminence on which the castle stands is less like a part of one continuous chain of hills than an isolated conical hill neighboured by lengthy ridges.

On that islanded hill, shouldered by taller neighbours, the castle was built, because at this point it so effectually guarded these passes from the shores of Purbeck to the inland regions. The position in these days seems a singular one, for from the upper slopes of those neighbours it is possible to look down into the castle and observe its every detail, but such things mattered little in days before artillery.

A first impression of Corfe, if it be summer, is an impression of dazzling whiteness ; resolved, on a nearer approach, into the pure white of the road and of the occasional repairs and restorations of the stone-built streets, the grey white of buildings past their first novelty, and the dead greyness of the roofing slabs of stone. There is little colour in Corfe when June has gone. The golden-green

lichens and houseleeks of spring have been sucked dry by the summer heats and turned to withered rustiness, and even the grass of the pyramidical hill on which the castle keep is reared has little more than an exhausted sage-green hue.

"Corvsgate Castle," as we find it styled in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, is frequently the scene, at such a time of year, of meetings like that of the "Imperial Association" in that story. All that is to be known respecting these ruins, "the meagre stumps remaining from flourishing bygone centuries," is the common property of all interested in historical antiquities, but there is something, it may be supposed, in revisiting the oft-visited and in retelling the old tale, which bids defiance to *ennui* and precludes satiety, even although the President's address be a paraphrase of the last archæological paper, and that the echo of its predecessor, and so forth, in endless *diminuendo*:

> And smaller fleas have lesser fleas,
> And so *ad infinitum.*

"Carfe," as any Wessex man of the soil will name it, just as horses are 'harses' and hornets become 'harnets' in his ancient and untutored pronunciation, is, as already hinted, a place of stone buildings, where brick, although not unknown, is remarkable. Stone from foundation to roof, and stone slabs of immense size for the roofs themselves. In a place where building-stone is and has been so readily found it is, of course, in the nature of things to find the remains of a castle that must have been exceptionally large and strong, and here

CORFE CASTLE.

"The meagre stumps remaining from flourishing bygone centuries."

they are, peering over the rooftops of the town from whatever point of view you choose. The castle is as essential a feature in all views of the town as it is in history ; and rightly too, for had it not been for that fortress there would have been no town. It is a town by courtesy and ancient estate, and a village by size ; a village that does not grow and has so far escaped the desecration of modern streets. The market cross, recently restored to perfection from a shattered stump, and the town hall both declare it to have been a town, as does, or did, the existence of a mayor, but such things have long become vanities. The return of two members to Parliament, a privilege Corfe enjoyed until reform put an end to it in 1832, proved nothing, for Parliamentary representation was no more fixed on the principle of comparative electorates than the representation of Ireland is now in the House of Commons.

The temperance interest need by no means be shocked when it is said that the most interesting feature of Corfe, next to the castle, is its inn. The church does not count ; for the body of it has been uninterestingly rebuilt, and only the fine tower, of Perpendicular date, remains. The inns, however, combine picturesqueness with the solid British comforts of old times and the less substantial amenities of the new. Here, looking upon the "Bankes Arms," with its highly elaborate heraldic sign, you can have no manner of doubt as to what family is still paramount in Corfe, and I think, perhaps, that to shelter behind so gorgeous an achievement even reflects a halo upon the guest ; while if the "Greyhound" can confer no such satisfaction, its unusual picturesqueness,

with that charming feature of a porch projecting over the pavement and owning a capacious room poised above the comings and goings, the commerce and gossipings of the people, can at least give a visitor the charm of what, although an ancient feature of the place, is at least a novelty to him.

The three cylindrical stone columns of plethoric figure which support this porch and its room are more generally useful than the architect who placed them here, some two hundred and eighty years ago, probably ever imagined they would be. *He* devised them for the support of his gazebo above, but more than twenty generations of Wessex folk have found them convenient for leaning-stocks, and the comfortable support they give has further lengthened many a long argument which, had all contributing parties stood supported only by their own two natural posts that carry the bodily superstructure, would have been earlier concluded. The progress of an argument, discussion, narration, or negotiation under such unequal conditions is to be watched with interest. Time probably will forbid one being followed from beginning to end; but to be a spectator of one of these comedies from the middle onwards is sufficient. The length it has already been played may generally be pretty accurately estimated by the state of weariness or impatience exhibited by that party to it who is not supported by the pillar. The "well, as I was saying" of the one enjoying the leaning-stock, discloses, like the parson's "secondly, Dear brethren," the fact that the discourse is well on the way, but the same thing may be gathered by those out

of earshot, in the manœuvres of the less fortunate of the two, the one who is supporting his own bulk. He stands upright, hands behind his back, while swaying his walking stick ; then he leans his weight to one side upon it, first (if he be a stout man, whom it behoves to exercise caution) carefully selecting a safe crevice in the jointing of the pavement, as a bearing for the ferule of his ash-plant ; then, growing weary of this attitude, he repeats the process on the other side, changing after a while to the expedient of a sideways stress, halfway up the body, by straining the walking stick horizontally against the wall. Then, having exhausted all possible movements, he takes a bulky silver watch from his pocket, and affects to find time unexpectedly ahead of him ; and when this resort is reached the spectacle generally comes to a conclusion.

But it is time to follow Ethelberta into the castle :—

" Ethelberta crossed the bridge over the moat, and rode under the first archway into the outer ward. As she had expected, not a soul was here. The arrow-slits, portcullis-grooves, and staircases met her eye as familiar friends, for in her childhood she had once paid a visit to the spot. Ascending the green incline and through another arch into the second ward, she still pressed on, till at last the ass was unable to clamber an inch further. Here she dismounted, and tying him to a stone which projected like a fang from a raw edge of wall, performed the remainder of the journey on foot. Once among the towers above, she became so interested in the windy corridors, mildewed dungeons, and the tribe

of daws peering invidiously upon her from overhead, that she forgot the flight of time."

The ruins that Ethelberta and the "Imperial Association" had come to inspect owe their heaped and toppling ruination to that last great armed convulsion in our insular history, the Civil War, whose two greatest personalities were Charles I. and Oliver Cromwell. Until that time the proud fortress had stood unharmed, as stalwart as when built in Norman times.

The history of Corfe before those times is very obscure, and no one has yet discovered whether the first recorded incident in it took place at a mere hunting-lodge here or at the gates of a fortress. That incident, the first and most atrocious of all the atrocious deeds of blood wrought at Corfe, was the murder of King Edward "the Martyr," in A.D. 978, by his stepmother, Queen Elfrida, anxious to secure the throne for her own son. The boy—he was only in his nineteenth year—had drawn rein here, on his return alone from hunting, and was drinking at the door from a goblet handed him by Elfrida herself when she stabbed him to the heart. His horse, startled at the attack, darted away, dragging the body by the stirrups, and thus, battered and lifeless, it was found.

Built, or rebuilt, in the time of the Conqueror, Corfe Castle was early besieged, and in that passage gave a good account of itself and justified its existence, for King Stephen failed to take it by force or to starve the garrison out. How long he may have been pleased to sit down before it we do not know, for the approach of a relieving force

caused him to pack his baggage and be off. Strong, however, as it was even then, it was continually under enlargement in the reigns of Henry II., Henry III., and Edward I., and had a better right to the oft-used boast of being impregnable than most other fortresses.

CHAPTER XI

CORFE CASTLE

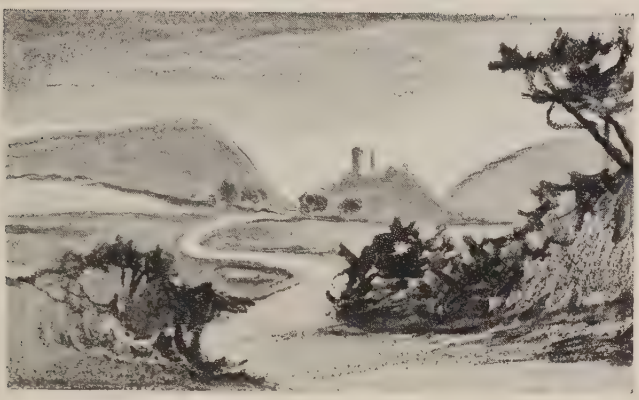
LIKE some cruel ogre of folk-lore the Castle of Corfe has drunk deep of blood. Its strength kept prisoners safely guarded, as well as foes at arm's length, and many a despairing wretch has been hurried through the now ruined gatehouse, to the muttered "God help him!" of some compassionate warder. Through the great open Outer Ward and steeply uphill between the two gloomy circular drum-towers across the second ward, and thence to the Dungeon Tower at the further left-hand corner of the stronghold, they were taken and thrust into some vile place of little ease, to be imprisoned for a lifetime, to be starved to death, or more mercifully ended by the assassin's dagger. Twenty-four knights captured in Brittany, in arms against King John, in aid of his nephew, Arthur, were imprisoned here, in 1202, and twenty-two of them met death by starvation in some foul underground hold. Prince Arthur, as every one knows, was blinded by orders of the ruthless king, and Arthur's sister, Eleanor, was thrown into captivity, first here and then at Bristol, where, after forty years, she died. Thus did monarchs dispose of rivals, and those who aided them, in the "good old days," and other monarchs,

not so ferocious, or not so well able to take care of themselves, stood in danger of tasting the same fare, as in the case of Edward II. imprisoned here and murdered in the dungeons of Berkeley Castle. Sympathies go out to the unhappy captives and victims, but a knowledge of these things tells us that they would have done the same, had opportunity offered and the positions been reversed.

This stronghold held many a humbler prisoner, among them those who had offended in one or other of the easy ways of offence in this, the King's deer-forest of Purbeck ; and many others immured for mere caprice. The place must have reeked with blood and been strewn with bones like a hyæna's lair.

So much for the domestic history of Corfe Castle. Its last great appearance in the history of the nation was during the civil wars of King and Parliament, when it justified the design of its builders, and proved the excellence of its defences by successfully withstanding two sieges ; falling in the second solely by treachery. It had by that time passed through many hands, and had come at last to the Bankes family, by whom it is still owned. It was only eight years before the first siege in this war that the property had been acquired by the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, Sir John Bankes, who purchased it from the widow of that celebrated lawyer, Sir Edward Coke, the Coke of " Coke upon Littleton."

When the civil war broke out, Sir John Bankes, called to the King's side at York, left his wife and children at their home of Kingston Lacy, near Wimborne Minster, whence, for security from the



CORFE CASTLE.

"The first glimpse of town and castle clearly shows the clefts in the range of hills between which the place is built."

CORFE CASTLE.

"The ravine in which runs the road to Wareham."

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covert sneers and petty annoyances offered them by the once humbly subservient townsfolk, not slow to note the trend of affairs, they removed in the autumn of 1642 to Corfe Castle, where they spent the winter unmolested.

Although they thus sought shelter here, they probably had no idea of the heights to which the tide of rebellion would rise, and could scarce have anticipated being besieged; but the Parliamentary leaders in the district had their eyes upon a fortress which, already obsolete and the subject of antiquarian curiosity, could yet be made a place of strength, as the sequel was presently to show.

The first attempt to gain possession of the castle was by a subterfuge, ingenious and plausible enough. The Mayor of Corfe had from time immemorial held a stag hunt annually, on May Day, and it was thought that, if on this occasion some additional parties of horse were to attend, and to seize the stronghold under colour of paying a visit, the thing would be done with ease. So probably it would, but for the keen feminine intuition of Lady Bankes, who closed the gates and mounted a guard upon the entrance-towers, so that when those huntsmen came and demanded surrender, scarcely in the manner of visitors, they were at once denied admission, and effectually unmasked. The revolutionary committee sitting at Poole then considered it advisable to despatch a body of sailors, who appeared before the castle, early one morning, to demand the surrender of four small dismounted pieces of cannon with which it was armed. "But," says the *Mercurius Rusticus*, a contemporary news-sheet, "instead of delivering them, though at the time there were but

five men in the Castle, yet these five, assisted by the maid-servants, at their ladies' Command, mount these peeces on their carriages againe, and lading one of them they gave fire, which small Thunder so affrighted the Sea-men that they all quitted the place and ran away."

Operations thus opened, Lady Bankes proved herself a ready and resourceful general. By beat of drum she summoned tenants and friends, who, responding to the number of fifty, garrisoned the fortress for about a week, when a scarcity of provisions, together with threatening letters, and the entreaties of their wives, to whom home and children were more than King or Parliament, or the Bankes family either, made them shamble home again. We should perhaps not be too ready to censure them. Lady Bankes, however, did not despair. A born strategist, she perceived how vitally necessary it was, above all else, to lay in a stock of provisions ; and to secure them, and time for her preparations she offered in the meekest way to give up those cannon which, after all, although they made the maximum of noise effected a minimum of harm.

The enemy, pacified by this offer, removed the guns and left the castle alone for a while ; thinking its defences weak enough. But it was soon thoroughly provisioned, supplied with ammunition, and garrisoned under the command of one Captain Lawrence, and when the Roundheads of Poole next turned their attention to Corfe, behold ! it was bristling like a porcupine with pikes and musquetoons and all those ancient seventeenth-century engines of war, with which men were quaintly done to death

—when by some exceptional chance the marksmen earned their name and hit anybody.

The middle of June had gone before the Parliamentary forces from Poole made their appearance. They numbered between two and three hundred horse and foot, and brought two cannon, with which they played upon the castle from the neighbouring hills, with little effect. Then came an interlude, ended by the appearance, on June 23rd, of Sir Walter Erle with between five and six hundred men, to reinforce the besiegers. They brought with them a "Demy-Canon, a Culverin, and two Sacres," and with these fired a hail of small shot down into the castle upon those heights on either hand. The results were poor to insignificance, and it was then determined to attempt a storming of the castle. This grand advance, made on June 26th, was begun by intimidating shouts that no quarter would be granted, but the garrison were so little terrified by this fighting with the mouth that, tired of waiting the enemy from the walls, they even sallied out and slaughtered some of the foremost, who were approaching cautiously under cover of strange engines named the "Sow" and the "Boar." The besiegers then mounted a cannon on the top of the church-tower, "which," we are told, "they, without fears of prophanation used," and breaking the organ, used the pipes of it for shot-cases. The ammunition included, among other strange missiles, lumps of lead torn off the roof and rolled up.

All these things proving useless, a band of a hundred and fifty sailors was sent by the Earl of Warwick, with large supplies of petards and

grenadoes, and a number of scaling ladders, and then all thought the enterprise in a fair way of being ended. The sailors, nothing loth, were made drunk, the ladders were placed against the walls, and a sum of twenty pounds was offered to the first man up. With preparations so generous as these a riotous scaling-party, carrying pikes and hand-grenades, strove to mount the ladders, but were met by an avalanche of hot cinders, stones, and things still more objectionable, hoarded up by the garrison from those primitive sanitary contrivances called by antiquaries "garderobes," against such a contingency as this. One sailor has his clothes almost burnt off his back, another's courage is dowsed with a pail of slops, others are knocked over, bruised and battered, into the dry moat, by a hundredweight of stone heaved over the battlements, and long ladders full of escaladers, swarming up, on one another's heels, are flung backward with tremendous crashes by prokers from arrow-slits in the bastioned walls. Soldiers under the machicolated entrance towers have had their steel morions crushed down upon their heads by heavy weights dropped upon them, and are left gasping for breath and slowly suffocating in that meat-tin kind of imprisonment; and a more than ordinarily active besieger, who has made himself exceptionally prominent, is suddenly flattened out by a heavy lump of lead. "The knocks are too hot," as Shakespeare says, and the assailants are forced to retire, to bury their dead, to tend one another's hurts, and those most fortunate to cleanse themselves. That same night of August 4th, Sir Walter Erle, hearing a rumour of the King's forces approaching, hurriedly raised

the siege and retreated upon Poole, and not until February 1646 was Corfe Castle again molested.

This time it was beset to more purpose. Lady Bankes, now a widow, for her husband had died in 1644, parted from his family, was at Corfe, vigilant, keen-eyed, loyal, and more or less strictly blockaded between Roundhead garrisons. Wareham was in their possession, Poole, as ever, a hotbed of disaffection, and Swanage watched by land and sea. A gallant deed performed at the opening of 1646 by one Cromwell, a youthful officer strangely enough, considering his name, on the Royalist side, was of no avail. He with his troops burst through the enemy's lines at Wareham and on the way encountered the Parliamentary governor of that place, whom he captured and brought to Corfe. This was undertaken to afford Lady Bankes an opportunity of escaping, if she wished, but she fortunately refused, for on the way back the little party were captured.

The castle was then besieged by Colonel Bingham, and endured for forty-eight days the rigours of a strict investment. In the meanwhile, Lawrence, the governor, deserted and at the same time released the imprisoned governor of Wareham. Every one knew the King's cause here and in the whole of the kingdom to be in desperate straits, and the knowledge of fighting for a losing side unnerved all. Seeing the inevitable course of events, Lieutenant-Colonel Pitman, one of the defenders' officers, secretly opened negotiations with the enemy for the surrender, and, succeeding in persuading the new governor, who had taken the post deserted by Lawrence, that a reinforcement from Somersetshire

was expected, under that guise at dead of night admitted fifty Parliamentary troops into the keep. When morning dawned the garrison found themselves betrayed ; but, commanding as they did the lives of some thirty prisoners, they were able to exact favourable terms of surrender. And then, when all the defenders marched out, kegs of gunpowder were laid in keep and curtain-towers, down in dungeons and under roofs, and the match applied. When the roar and smoke of the explosion had died away, the stern walls that for five hundred years had frowned down upon the streets of Corfe had gone up in ruin.

Not altogether destroyed, in the Biblical completeness of the fulfilled prophecies of "not one stone upon another," concerning Nineveh, and the Cities of the Plain ; for tall spires of cliff-like masonry still represent the keep and gateway, and curtain-towers remain in recognisable shapes, connected by riven jaws of masonry, so hard and so formless that they are not easily to be distinguished from the rock in which their foundations are set. Here a tower may be seen, lifted up bodily by the agency of gunpowder, and set down again at a distance, gently and as fairly plumb as it was it its original position : there another has been torn asunder, as one tears a sheet of paper, and a few steps away is another, leaning at a much more acute angle than the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Everywhere, light is let into dungeons and battlements abased ; floors abolished and great empty stone fireplaces on what were second, third and fourth floors turned to mouth-pieces for the winds. And yet, although such havoc has been wrought, and although it is almost im-

possible to identify the greater part of its chambers, Corfe Castle is still a fine and an impressive ruin. It is grand when seen from afar, and not less grand when viewed near at hand, from the ravine in which runs the road to Wareham.

CHAPTER XII

WAREHAM

That is a straight and easy road which in four miles leads from Corfe to Wareham, and a breezy and bracing road too, across heaths quite as unspoilt as those of "Egdon," but of a more cheerful and hopeful aspect. *The Return of the Native*, whose scene is laid on the heaths to the north-west, could not, with the same justness of description, have been staged upon these, and from another circumstance, quite apart from this heart-lifting breeziness, these heaths have little in common with their brooding neighbours. They are enlivened with the signs of a very ancient and long-continued industry, for where the Romans discovered and dug in the great deposits of china-clay found here the Dorsetshire labourer still digs, and runs his truckloads on crazy tramways down to the quays upon Poole Harbour at Goathorn. Fragments of Roman pottery, made from this clay, are still occasionally found here, but since that time the clay has not been turned to extensive use on the spot where it is found, but is shipped for Staffordshire and abroad. Much of Poole's prosperity is due to the china-clay trade, carried on by the vessels of that

port, which receive it from barges crossing the harbour. It was early used for tobacco-pipes, and probably those of Sir Walter Raleigh's first experiments were made from the clay found here. So far back as 1760 the export of Purbeck china-clay had reached ten thousand tons annually. It has now risen to about sixty thousand.

This northern portion of the Isle of Purbeck is indeed of altogether different character from the rugged stony southern half, beyond Corfe. It is low-lying and heathy, and the roads are a complete change from the blinding whiteness characterising those of Purbeck *Petræa*, as it may be named. Here, mended with ironstone, they are of a ruddy colour.

Leaving the clay-cutters and their terraced diggings behind, we come, past the paltry hamlet of Stoborough, within sight of Wareham, entered across a long causeway over the Frome marshes and over an ancient Gothic bridge spanning the Frome itself. Ahead is seen the tower of St. Mary's, one of the only two churches remaining of the original eight. Five of the others have been swept away, and the sixth is converted into a school. Wareham, it will be guessed, is not a mushroom place of yesterday, but has a past and has seen many changes.

Wareham, "the oldest arnshuntest place in Do'set, where ye turn up housen underneath yer 'tater-patch," as described to the present historian by a rustic, who might have been the original of Haymoss, in *Two on a Tower*, is indeed of a hoary antiquity, and bears many evidences of that attractive fact. Its chief streets, named after the cardinal points of the compass, do not perhaps afford the best

evidences of that age, for they are broad and straight and lined with houses which, if not all Georgian, are so largely in that style that they influence the general character of the thoroughfares and give them an air of the eighteenth century. For this there is an excellent reason, found in the almost complete destruction by fire of Wareham, on July 25th, 1762.

To the ordinary traveller—and certainly to the commercial traveller—without a bias for history and antiquities, it is the dullest town in Wessex. Not decayed, like Cerne Abbas, its streets are yet void and still, and how it, under this constant solitude and somnolence, manages to retain its prosperity and cheerfulness is an unsolved riddle.

Wareham, like Dorchester, was enclosed within earthworks; but while Dorchester has overleaped those ancient bounds, Wareham has shrunk within them, and one who, climbing those stupendous fortifications, looks down upon the little town, sees gardens and orchards, pigsties and cowsheds plentifully intermingled with the streets, on the spot where other and vanished streets once stood. That "once," however, was so long ago that the effect of decay, once produced, no longer obtains, and the mind dwells, not so greatly upon the fallen fortunes evident in such things, as upon the luxuriance of the gardens themselves and the prettiness of the picture they produce, intermingled with the houses.

Wareham—"Anglebury" Mr. Hardy calls it—is, or was when the latest census returns were published, a town of two thousand and three inhabitants.

Since then it has certainly not increased, and most likely has lost more than those odd three, thus

APPROACH TO WAREHAM.

"*Across a long causeway over the Frome marshes.*"

THE WALLS OF WAREHAM.

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coming within the fatal definition given somewhere, by some one, of a village. Things are in this way come to a parlous state, for this is the latest of a good many modern strokes. One, which hurt its pride not a little, was when, in the redistribution of Parliamentary seats, it lost its representation and became merged in a county division. Another—but why enumerate these undeserved whips and scorns? In one respect Wareham keeps an urban character. It has two inns—the "Black Bear" and the "Red Lion"—that call themselves hotels, and a score or so of minor houses where, if you cannot obtain a desirable "cup of genuine," why, "'tis a sad thing and an oncivilised?"

It was doubtless its ancient story which induced Mr. Hardy to style Wareham "Anglebury," for that story is greatly concerned with the settlement of the Anglo-Saxons in Dorset and the fortunes of the Kingdom of Wessex. Conveniently near the sea, within the innermost recesses of Poole Harbour, and yet removed from the rage and havoc of the outer elements, it lies on the half-mile-broad tongue of land separating the two rivers Piddle and Frome, at the distance of little over a mile from where they debouch upon the landlocked harbour. In a nook such as this you might think a town would have been secure, and that was the hope of those who founded it here. But, to render assurance doubly sure, those original town-builders—who were probably much earlier than the invading Saxons and are thought to have been some British tribe—heaped up and dug out those famous "walls of Wareham," which surround the town to this day, and are not walls in the common acceptation of

the term, but ditches so deeply delved, and mounds so steeply piled that they are in some places little more scalable than a forthright, plumb up and down, wall of brick or masonry would be, and with an "angle of repose" sufficiently acute to astonish any modern railway engineer.

Wareham, lying within these cyclopean earthworks, was a place of strength, but it was its very strength that brought about the bloody tangle of its long history. Strong defences require determined attacks. That history only opens with some clearness at the time of the Saxon occupation, when the piratical Danes were beginning to harry the coast, but it continues with accounts of fierce assaults and merciless forays, repeated until the time when Guthrum, the Danish chief, was opposed by only a few dispirited defenders. In A.D. 876 these Northmen captured the place, but were besieged by Alfred the Great, who starved them out. Some Saxon confidence then returned, but the old miseries were repeated when Canute, not yet the pious Canute of his last years, sailed up the Frome and not only destroyed this already oft-destroyed town, but pillaged the greater part of Wessex.

Little wonder, then, that Wareham was described as a desolated place when the Conqueror came; but it was made to hold up its head once more, and the two mints it had owned in the time of Saxon Athelstan were re-established. The castle, whose name alone survives, in that of Castle Hill, was then built, and, in the added strength it gave, was the source of many troubles soon to come. It was surprised and seized for the Empress Maud in 1138, but captured and burnt by Stephen four years

later, in the absence of its governor, the Earl of Gloucester, who returning, recaptured the town after a three-weeks' siege. At length the treaty of peace and tolerance between Stephen and Maud gave the townsfolk—those few of them who had been courageous enough to remain, and fortunate enough

WAREHAM.

"The church of St. Martin, perched boldly on a terrace above the road."

to survive—an opportunity of creeping out of the cellars, and of looking around and reviewing their position. "Hope springs eternal," and these remnants of the Wareham folk were in some measure justified of their faith, for it was not until another half-century had passed that the town was again besieged and taken. That event was an

incident in the contention between King John and his Barons, and a feature of it was the destruction of the castle, never afterwards rebuilt.

That destruction was one of the greatest blessings that could possibly have befallen this ancient cockpit of racial and personal warfares, for it rendered Wareham a place of little account in the calculations of mediæval partisans ; and then it grew and prospered, unmolested, until the Civil War of Crown and Parliament, when old times came again, in the bewildering circumstances of its being garrisoned for the Parliament against the inclination of the loyal townsfolk, besieged and half ruined and then captured by the Royalists, obliged to batter the property of their friends before they could recover it, and then stormed and surrendered and regained and evacuated until the Muse of History herself ceases to keep tally. Few people looked on : most took an active part, and the rector himself, " a stiff-necked and stubborn scorner of good things," was wounded in the head and imprisoned nineteen times. The obvious criticism here is that they must have been short sentences. The Parliamentary commander, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, was for punishing the " dreadful malignancy shown towards the cause of righteousness " by the Wareham people, and advised that the place be " plucked down and made no town " ; but this course was not adopted.

Apart from battles and sieges, Wareham has witnessed many horrid deeds. In that castle whose site alone remains, Robert de Belesme was starved to death in 1114, and on those walls an unfortunate and indiscreet hermit and prophet, one Peter of

Pomfret, who had prophesied that the King should lose his crown, was hanged and quartered in 1213, after having been fed, in the manner of the prophet Micaiah, with the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction, in the gruesome dungeons of Corfe. For King John, the Ahab of our history, had a way of his own with seers of visions and prophesiers of disaster ; and his way, it will be allowed, very effectually discouraged prying into futurity.

Here also, at a corner of these grassy ramparts still called " Bloody Bank," three poor fellows who had taken part in the Monmouth Rebellion were hanged, portions of their bodies being afterwards exposed, with ghastly barbarity, in different parts of the town.

Following the long broad street from where the town is entered across the Frome, the " Black Bear " is passed, prominent with its porch and the great chained effigy of the black bear himself, sitting on his rump upon the roof of it. Passing the Church of St. Martin, perched boldly on a terrace above the road, its tower bearing a quaintly lettered tablet, handing the churchwardens of 1712 down to posterity, we now come to the northern extremity of Wareham, and descending to the banks of the Piddle, may, looking backwards, see those old defences, the so-styled " walls," heaped up with magnificent emphasis.

They envisage the ancient drama of the contested town, and although it is a drama long since played, and the curtain rung down upon the last act, two hundred and fifty years ago, this scenery of it can still eloquently recall its dragonadoes and blood-boltered episodes.

CHAPTER XIII

WAREHAM TO WOOL AND BERE REGIS

Leaving Wareham by West Street, where there is a "Pure Drop" inn, perhaps suggesting the sign of the public where John Durbeyfield boozed, at far-away Marlott, a valley road leads by East Stoke to the remains of Bindon Abbey.

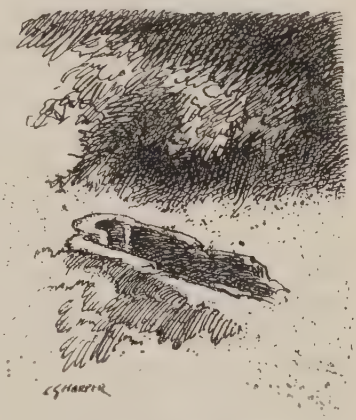
The ruins of Bindon Abbey are few and formless, standing in tree-grown and unkempt grounds, where a black and green stagnant moat surrounds a curious circular mound. Those who demolished Bindon Abbey did their work thoroughly, for little is left of it save the bases of columns and the foundations of walls, in which archæological societies see darkly the ground plan of the old Cistercian monastery. A few stone slabs and coffins remain, among them a stone with the indent of a vanished life-sized brass to an abbot. The inscription survives, in bold Lombardic characters—

ABBAS RICARDUS DE MANERS HIC TUMULATUR
APPŒNAS TARDUS DEUS HUNC SALVANS
TUEATUR.

Close by is the stone sarcophagus in which Angel Clare, sleep-walking from Woolbridge House (which is represented in the story as being much nearer to this spot than it really is), laid Tess.

Near the ruin, beside the Frome, is Bindon Abbey Mill, where Angel Clare proposed to learn milling.

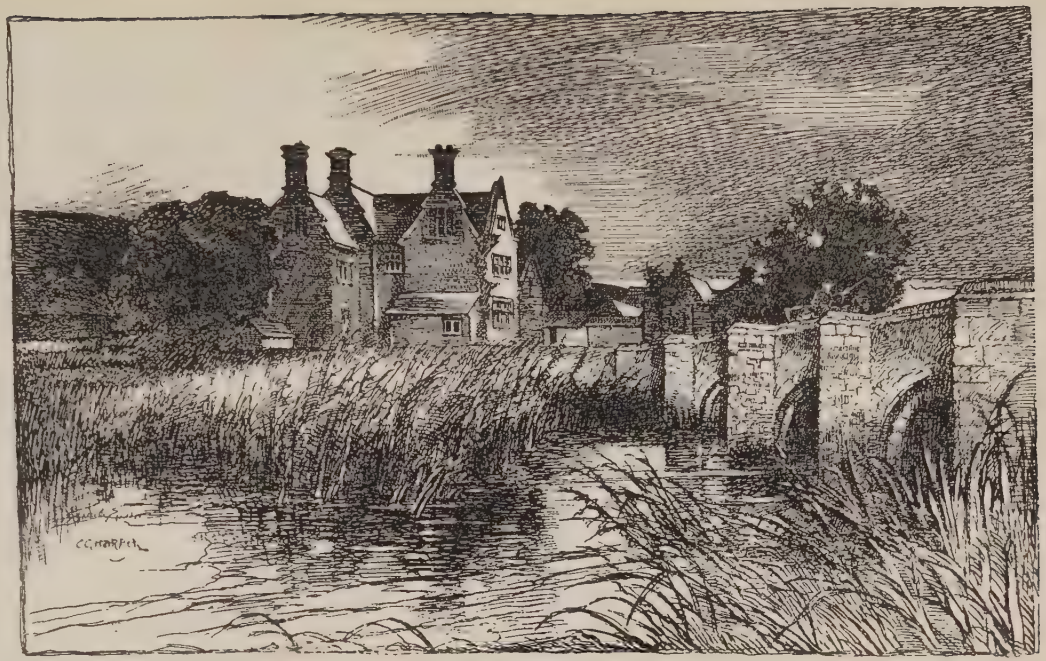
Here that thing not greatly in accord with monastic remains and hallowed vestiges of the olden times—a railway station—comes within sight and hearing at the end of Wool village. Old and new, quiet repose and the bustling conduct of business, mingle strangely here, for within sight of Wool railway station, and within hearing of the clashing of the heavy consignments of milk-churns, driven up to it, to be placed on the rail and sent to qualify the tea of London's great populations, stands the great, mellowed, Elizabethan, red brick grange or mansion known as Woolbridge House, romantically placed on the borders of the rushy river Frome. The property at one time belonged to the neighbouring Abbey of Bindon, from which it came to Sir Thomas Poynings, and then to John Turberville. Garrisoned as a strategic point during the Civil Wars, its history since that period is an obscure and stagnant one. Long since passed from Turberville hands, it now belongs to the Erle-Drax family of Charborough Park and Holnest. The air of bodeful tragedy that naturally enwraps the place and has



THE ABBOT'S COFFIN, BINDON ABBEY.

made many a passenger in the passing trains exclaim at sight of it, "what a fitting home for a story!" has at last been justified in its selection by the novelist as the scene of Tess's confession to her husband. It was here the newly married pair were to have spent their honeymoon. "They drove by the level road along the valley, to a distance of a few miles, and, reaching Wellbridge, turned away from the village to the left, and over the great Elizabethan bridge, which gives the place half its name. Immediately behind it stood the house wherein they had engaged lodgings, whose external features are so well known to all travellers through the Frome Valley; once portion of a fine manorial residence, and the property and seat of a D'Urberville, but since its partial demolition, a farm-house."

It is not altogether remarkable that Clare found the "mouldy old habitation" somewhat depressing to his dear one; and she was altogether startled and frightened at "those horrid women," whose portraits are actually, as in the pages of the novel they are said to be, on the walls of the staircase: "two life-size portraits on panels built into the masonry. As all visitors are aware, these paintings represent women of middle age, of a date some two hundred years ago, whose lineaments once seen can never be forgotten. The long pointed features, narrow eye, and smirk of the one, so suggestive of merciless treachery; the bill-hook nose, large teeth, and bold eye of the other, suggesting arrogance to the point of ferocity, haunt the beholder afterwards in his dreams." They are indeed unprepossessing dames. One is growing indistinguishable, but the other still wickedly leers



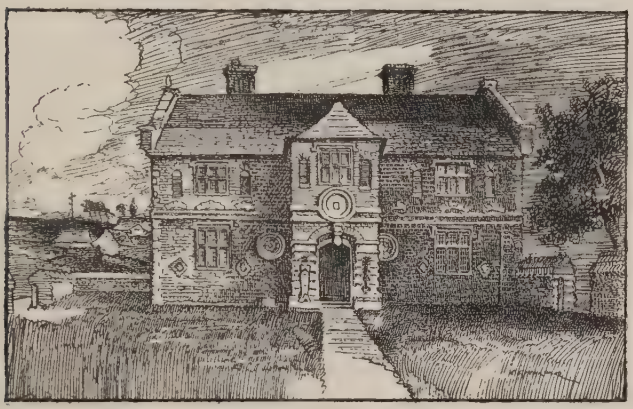
WOOLBRIDGE HOUSE.

"Over the great Elizabethan bridge which gives the place half its name."

at you, glancing from the tail of her eye, as though challenging admiration. A painted round or oval decorative frame surrounds these Turberville portraits, for such they are, and so they were explained to be to Clare, who uneasily recognised their likeness in an exaggerated form, to his own darling. All the old D'Urberville vices of lawless cunning, mediæval ferocity, and callous heartlessness are reflected in those sinister portraits, which seemed to him to hold up a distorting mirror to the woman he had married, and certainly proved themselves of her kin.

A farm-house the place remains, the ground-floor rooms stone-flagged and chilly to modern notions, the fireplaces vast and cavernous as they are wont to be in such old houses. It is perhaps more romantic seen in the middle distance than when made the subject of closer study. But it is of course the home of a ghost story, and a very fine and aristocratic ghost-story too, made the subject of an allusion in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles.* It seems that in that very long ago, generally referred to in fairy stories as "once upon a time," there was a Turberville whose unholy passions so broke all bounds of restraint that he murdered a guest while the two of them were riding in the Turberville family coach. But as the guest was himself one of the family, it were a more judicial thing, perhaps, to divide the blame. This incident in the annals of a race who very improperly often figured as sheriffs and such-like guardians of law and order, took place on the road between Wool and Bere, and we are asked to believe that there are those who have heard the wheels of the blood-stained family

coach traversing this route. One or two are said to have seen it, but *they* are persons proved to own some mixture of that blood, for to none other is this pleasing spectacle of a black midnight coach and demon horses vouchsafed. But stay! Not so pleasing after all, this proof of ancestry, for to



WOOLBRIDGE HOUSE : ENTRANCE FRONT.

them it is a warning of impending disaster and dissolution.

That is a terribly dusty road which, in six miles, leads from Woolbridge to Bere Regis, across the heaths : in some summers—*experto crede*—so astonishingly deep in dust that it is not only impossible to ride a bicycle over it, but scarce possible to walk. But this heath road is as variable as the moods of a woman. It will be of this complexion at one time, and at another entirely different. It is perhaps only when this desirable difference rules that one

appreciates the scenery it passes through; scenery wholly of buff sand, purple heather, furze, and bracken, whose colours are by distance blended into that rich purple brown termed, in *The Return of the Native*, "swart." For this is the district of that gloomy tale, perhaps at once the most powerful and painful in its tragic intensity of all the Wessex novels, and one in which the element of scenery adds most strikingly to the unfolding of futilities and disasters. "Bere Heath" it is, according to the chartographers of the Ordnance Survey, but to ourselves who are on literary pilgrimage bent, it is Egdon Heath whose "swart abrupt slopes" are here seen on every side, now rising into natural hillocks masquerading solemnly as sepulchral tumuli, now dipping into hollows where the rainwater collects in marshy pools and keeps green the croziers and fully-opened fronds of the bracken much longer than the parched growths, at the crests of these rises; and again spreading out into little scrubby plains.

Mr. Hardy, who has translated the reticent solemnity of Egdon Heath into such poignant romance, has said how pleasant it is to think or dream that some spot in these extensive wilds may be the heath of Lear, that traditionary King of Wessex whose sorrows Shakespeare has made the subject of tragedy; and he has himself, in *The Return of the Native*, made these heaths the stage whereon a tragedy is enacted that itself bids fair to become a classic little less classical than the works of Shakespeare. True it is that his tragedy is in the rustic kind, and none of the characters in it far above the homespun sort, but the stricken

GALLOWS HILL, EGDON HEATH.

"The moorland goes stretching away to Poole Harbour, seen from this vice-point on moonlit nights, glancing like a mirror."

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worm feels as great a pang as when a giant dies, and the woes of Mrs. Yeobright, of Clym, and of Eustacia and Damon Wildeve are none the less thrilling than those of that

> ". . . very foolish fond old man
> Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less,"

whose wanderings are the theme of Shakespeare's muse.

The Return of the Native is a story of days as well as nights, of fair weather and foul, of sunshine and darkness, but it is in essence the story of a darkened stage. The description of Egdon in the opening chapter is the keynote of a mournful fugue :—

"The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening : it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread.

"In fact, precisely at this transitional point of its nightly roll into darkness the great and particular glory of the Egdon waste began, and nobody could be said to understand the heath who had not been there at such a time. It could best be felt when it could not clearly be seen, its complete effect and explanation lying in this and the succeeding hours before the next dawn : then, and only then, did it tell its true tale. The spot was, indeed, a near relation of night, and when night showed itself an apparent tendency to gravitate together could be perceived in its shades and the scene. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and

meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it."

An artist who should come to Egdon, intent upon studying its colour-scheme, would be nonplussed by the more than usual fickleness and instability of its daylight hues. Shrouded in the black repose of night, its tone is a thing of some permanence, but under the effects of sunshine he finds it now purple, now raw sienna, shading off into Prout's Brown,

CHAMBERLAIN'S BRIDGE.
"A battered old red-brick pont."

and again rising to glints and fleeting stripes of rich golden yellow. It would be the despair of one who worked in the slow analytic manner of a Birket Foster, but the joy of an impressionist like a Whistler.

The extremely rich and beautiful colouring of Wool and Bere Heaths deepens with the setting of the sun to a velvety blackness and gives to the fir-crowned hills melodramatic and tragical significances. Such an one is Gallows Hill, where the road goes in a hollow formed by the massive shoulders of the tree-studded

height. Here, the gossips say, with the incertitude of rustic indifference, a man hanged himself, or was hanged. When or why he committed what we have the authority of conventional old-time journalism for calling "the rash deed," does not—in the same language—"transpire." But certainly he selected a romantic spot for ending, for from the ragged crest, underneath one of those "clumps and

RYE HILL, BERE REGIS.
"The remarkably picturesque old thatched cottage."

stretches of fir-trees, whose notched tops are like battlemented towers crowning black-fronted castles of enchantment," the moorland, under the different local names of Hyde Heath, Decoy Heath, and Gore Heath, but all one to the eye, goes stretching away some ten miles, to Poole Harbour, seen from this view-point, on moonlit nights, glancing like a mirror in a field of black velvet.

A juicy interlude to the summer dryness of these wastes is that dip in the road where one comes to the river Piddle at Chamberlain's Bridge, a battered old red brick pont that, by the aid of the quietly gliding stream and the dark, boding mass of fir-crowned Mat Hill in the background, makes a memorable picture. Only when Bere Regis comes within sight are the solitudes of Egdon left behind. Steeply down goes the way into the village, down Rye Hill, past the remarkably picturesque old thatched cottage illustrated here, perched on its steep roadside bank, and so at last on to the level where Bere Church is glimpsed, standing four-square and handsome in advance of the long street, backed by dense clumps of that tree, the fir, which has so strong an affection for these sandy heaths. Here then is the introduction to the "Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill" of the Wessex novels, the "half-dead townlet . . . the spot of all spots in the world which could be considered the D'Urbervilles' home, since they had resided there for full five hundred years."

CHAPTER XIV

BERE REGIS

THIS "blinking little place," and now perhaps a not even blinking, but fast asleep village, was at one time a market-town, and, more than that, as its latinised name would imply, a royal residence. Kingsbere, said to mean "Kingsbury"—that is to say, "King's place" or building—really obtained its name in very different fashion. It was plain "Bere," long before the Saxon monarchs came to this spot and caused the latter-day confusion among antiquaries of the British "bere," meaning an underwood, a scrub, copse, bramble, or thorn-bed, with the Anglo-Saxon "byrig." We have but to look upon the surroundings of Bere Regis even at this day, a thousand years years later, to see how truly descriptive that British name really was. It was of old a place greatly favoured by royalty, from that remote age when Elfrida murdered her stepson, Edward the King and Martyr, at Corfe Castle, and thrashed her own son Ethelred here with a large wax candle, for reproaching her with the deed. Those events happened in A.D. 978, and it is therefore not in any way surprising that no traces of the ferocious Queen Elfrida's residence have survived. Ethelred, we are told, hated wax candles ever after

that severe thrashing, and doubtless hated Bere as well; but it was more than ever a royal resort in the later times of King John, who visited it on several occasions in the course of his troubled reign. Thenceforward, however, the favours of monarchs ceased, and it came to depend upon the good will of the Abbots of Tarent Abbey and that of the Turbervilles, who between them became owners of the manor.

The village street of Bere is bleak and barren. It is a street of rustic cottages of battered red brick, or a compost of mud, chopped straw, and lime, called "cob," built on a brick base, often plastered, almost all of them thatched: some with new thatch, some with thatch middle-aged, others yet with thatch ancient and decaying, forming a rich and fertile bed for weeds and ox-eyed daisies and "bloody warriors," as the local Dorsetshire name is for the rich red wall-flowers. Sometimes the old thatch has been stripped before the new was placed: more often it has not, and the merest casual observer can, as he passes, easily become a critic of the thoroughness or otherwise with which the thatcher's work has been performed, not only by sight of the different shades belonging to old and new, but by the varying thicknesses with which the roofs are seen to be covered. Here an upstairs window looks out immediately, open-eyed, upon the sunlight; there another peers blinkingly forth, as behind beetling eyebrows, from half a yard's depth of straw and reed, shading off from a coal-black substratum to a coffee-coloured layer, and thence to the amber top-coating of the latest addition. Warm in winter, cool in summer, is the testimony of cottagers towards

thatch ; and earwiggy always, thinks the stranger under such roofs, as he observes quaint lepidoptera ensconced comfortably in his bed. Picturesque it certainly is, expensive too, although it may not generally be thought so ; but it is more enduring than cheap slates or tiles, and, according to many who should know, if indeed their prejudices do not warp their statements, cheaper in the long run. It is, in fine, not easy to come to a definitive pronouncement

BERE REGIS.

"The church, backed by dense clumps of firs."

on the merits or demerits, the comparative cheapness or costliness, of rival roofing materials. The cost of the materials themselves, payments for laying them, and the astonishing difference between the enduring qualities of thatch well and thatch indifferently laid forbid certitude. But all modern local authorities are opposed to thatch, chiefly on the score of its liability to fire. All the many and extensive fires of Dorsetshire have been caused by

ignited thatch ; or else, caused in other ways, have been spread and magnified by it. Yet, here again your rustic will stoutly defend the ancient roofing, and declare that while such a roof is slowly smouldering, and before it bursts into a blaze, he can dowse it with a pail of water. No doubt, but that water, from a well perhaps two hundred feet deep, and that ladder from some neighbour half-a-mile away, are sometimes not to be brought to bear with the required celerity.

This, let it be fervently said, is not an attack upon thatch : it is but the presentation of pros and cons, and is no argument in favour of that last word in utilitarian hideousness, corrugated galvanized iron, under whose shelter you freeze in winter and fry in summer.

Meanwhile, here are ruined cottages in the long street of Bere, whose condition has been brought about by just such causes, and whose continuation in that state is due, not to a redundancy of dwellings, but because the Lady of the Manor at Charborough, despising the insignificant rents here, will not trouble about, or go to the expense of, rebuilding.

Hence the gaps in the long row, like teeth missing from a jaw.

Not a little hard-featured and stern at first sight, owing to the entire absence of the softening feature of gardens upon the road, this long street of Bere has yet a certain self-reliant strong-charactered aspect that brings respect. It has, too, the most interesting and beautiful church, rich in historical, and richer in literary, associations.

Bere Regis in its decay is a storehouse of old

BERE REGIS.
"A blinking little place."

Dorset speech and customs. To its cottagers vegetables are "gearden-tackle," sugar—at least, the moist variety—is "zand," and garden-flowers all have quaint outlandish names. The rustic folk have a keen, if homely philosophy. "Ef 'twarnt for the belly," said one to the present writer, in allusion to cost of living, "back 'ud wear gold." "Bere," said another—an 'outlandish' person he, who had only been settled in the village a decade or so and accordingly was only regarded as a stranger, and so indeed regarded himself—"Bere, a poor dra'lattin twankyten pleace, ten mile from anywheer, God help it!" which is so very nearly true that, if you consult the map you will find that Dorchester is ten miles distant, Corfe Castle twelve, Wimborne twelve, Blandford eight, and Wareham, the nearest town, seven miles away.

"Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill," as Mr. Hardy elects to rechristen Bere Regis, owes the ultimate limb of that compound name to Woodbury Hill, a lofty elevation rising like an exaggerated down, but partly clothed with trees, on the outskirts of Bere Regis. The novelist describes this scene of an ancient annual fair, now much shrunken from its olden import, rather as it was than as it is. "Greenhill was the Nijni Novgorod of South Wessex; and the busiest, merriest, noisiest day of the whole statute number was the day of the sheep-fair. This yearly gathering was upon the summit of a hill, which retained in good preservation the remains of an ancient earthwork, consisting of a huge rampart and entrenchment of an oval form, encircling the top of the hill, though somewhat broken down here and there. To each of the two openings, on opposite sides,

a winding road ascended, and the level green space of twenty or thirty acres enclosed by the bank was the site of the fair. A few permanent erections dotted the spot, but the majority of the visitors patronised canvas alone for resting and feeding under during the time of their sojourn here."

The place looks interesting, viewed from beneath whence two forlorn-looking houses are seen perched on the very ridge of the windy height. But it is always best to remain below, and so to keep romantic illusions; and here is no exception. Climbing to the summit, those two houses are increased to fifteen or seventeen red-brick, storm-beaten cottages, some thatched, others slated, mostly uninhabited; all commonplace. The fair is still held in September, beginning on the 18th, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Formerly it lasted a week, and, at the rate of a hundred pounds a day in tolls to the Lord of the Manor, brought that fortunate person an annual "unearned increment" as the Radicals would call it, of £700. Nowadays those tolls are very much of a negligible quantity.

Here it was, during the sheep fair, that Troy, supposed to have long before been drowned in Lulworth Cove, but living and masquerading as Mr. Francis, the Great Cosmopolitan Roughrider, enacted the part of Dick Turpin in the canvas-covered show, and, looking through a hole in the tent, unobserved himself, observed Bathsheba, who had thought him dead.

The villagers of Bere look askance upon the dwellers on this eyrie. They tell you "they be gipsy vo'k up yon," and hold it to be the last resort of those declining in worldly estate. Villagers

going, metaphorically, "down the hill" in the direction of outdoor relief, move to the less desirable cottages in the village, and then, complete penury at last overtaking them, continue their moral and economic descent by the geographical ascent of this hill of Woodbury, whence they are at last removed to "The Union."

Below Woodbury Hill, on the edge of Bere Wood, the scene of an old Turberville attempt at illegal enclosure, is rural Bloxworth, whose little church contains the fine monument of Sir John Trenchard "of the ancient family of the Trenchards in Dorsetshire," Sergeant-at-Law and Secretary of State in the reign of William and Mary. He died in 1695, aged 46. Ten years before, he had been an active sympathiser with the Duke of Monmouth, in that ill-fated rebellion, and it is told, how, when visiting one Mr. Speke at Ilchester, hearing that Jeffreys had issued a warrant for his arrest, he instantly took horse, rode to Poole and thence crossed to Holland, returning with the Prince of Orange three years later.

Above all other interest at Bere is the beautiful church, standing a little distance below the long-drawn village street, and clearly from its character and details, a building cherished and beautified by the Abbey of Tarent, by the Turbervilles, and by Cardinal Archbishop Morton, native of the place.

The three-staged pinnacled tower is very fine, the lower stage alternately of stone and flint, the three surmounting courses diapered: the second and third stages treated wholly in that chessboard fashion. The beautiful belfry windows, of three lights, divided into three stages by transoms, are

filled with pierced stonework. The exterior south wall of the church is of alternate red brick and flint,

BERE REGIS: INTERIOR OF CHURCH.

"The extraordinarily gorgeous, elaborately carved and painted timber roof."

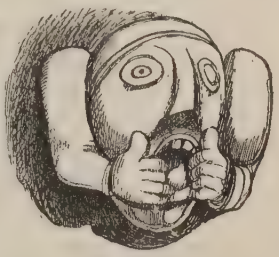
in courses of threes. There is a remarkable window in the west wall of the north aisle, and in the south wall the exceptionally fine and unusual Turberville

window, of late Gothic character and five lights, filled in modern times by the Erle-Drax family, of Charborough, with a series of stained-glass armorial shields, displaying the red lion of the Turbervilles, all toe-nails and whiskers, and ducally crowned, ramping against an ermine field, firstly by himself and then conjointly with the arms of the families with which the Turbervilles, in the course of many centuries, allied themselves. The Erle-Draxes have not, in honouring the extinct Turberville, forgotten themselves, for some of the shields display their arms and those of the Sawbridges, Grosvenors, Churchills, and Eggintons they married.

Entering, the building is seen to be even more beautiful than without. Its most striking and unusual feature—unusual in this part of the country—is the extraordinarily gorgeous, elaborately carved and painted timber roof, traditionally said to have been the gift of Cardinal Morton, born at Milborne Stileman, in the parish of Bere Regis. The hammer-beams are boldly carved into the shapes of bishops, cardinals, and pilgrims, while the bosses are worked into great faces that look down with a fat calm satisfaction that must be infinitely reassuring to the congregations.

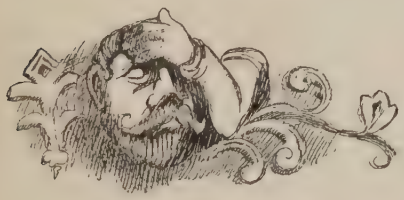
The bench ends are another interesting feature. Many are old, others are new, done in the old style when the church was admirably restored by Street. Had Sir Gilbert Scott been let loose upon it, it may well be supposed that the surviving bench-ends would have been cast out, and nice new articles by the hands of his pet firm of ecclesiastical furnishers put in their stead. One is dated, in

Roman numerals, MCCCCCXLVII ; another is inscribed "IOH. DAV. WAR. DENOF. THYS. CHARYS," and another bears a merchant's mark, with the initial of "I. T." The Transitional Norman pillars are bold and virile, with humorous carvings of that period strikingly projecting from their capitals. It evidently seemed to that now far-away waggish fellow who sculptured them that toothache and headache were things worth caricaturing. Let us hope he never suffered from them, but he evidently took as models some who were such martyrs.



"TOOTHACHE," BERE REGIS.

But the centre of interest to us in these pages is by the Turberville window in the south aisle, beneath whose gorgeous glass is the great ledger-stone, covering the last resting-place of the extinct family. It is boldly lettered :



"HEADACHE," BERE REGIS.

Ostium sepulchri antiquae Famillae Turberville
24 *Junij* 1710
(*The door of the sepulchre of the ancient family of the Turbervilles*).

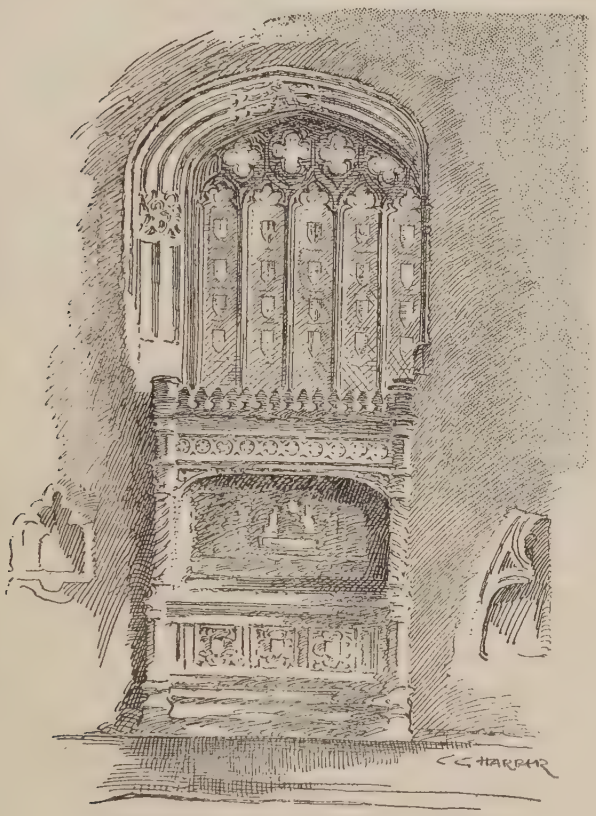
In the wall beneath the window is a defaced Purbeck marble altar-tomb, and four others neighbour it. These are the tombs described in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as "canopied, altar-shaped, and plain ; their brasses torn from their matrices,

the rivet-holes remaining, like marten-holes in a sand-cliff," and it was on one of those that Alec D'Urberville lay prone, in pretence of being an effigy of one of her ancestors, when Tess was exploring the twilight church.

The great monumental *History of Dorsetshire* tells the enquirer a good deal of the Turbervilles who, being themselves all dead and gone to their place, have, with a slight alteration in the spelling of their name served as a peg on which to hang the structure of one of the finest exercises ever made in the art of novel writing. It seems that the Turbervilles descended from one Sir Pagan or Payne Turberville, or de Turbida Villa, who is shown in the Roll of Battle Abbey—or was shown, before that Roll was accidentally burnt—to have come over with the Conqueror. After the Battle of Hastings he seems to have been one of twelve knights who helped Robert Fitz Hamon, Lord of Estremaville, in his unholy enterprises, and then to have returned to England when his over-lord was created Earl of Gloucester. He warred in that lord's service, in the Norman conquest of Glamorgan, and was rewarded with a tit-bit of spoil there, in the shape of the lordship of Coyty.

In the reign of Henry III. a certain John de Turberville is found paying an annual fee or fine in respect of some land in the forest of Bere, which an ancestor of his had impudently endeavoured to enclose out of the estate of the Earl of Hereford; and in 1297 a member of the family is found in the neighbourhood of Bere Regis. This Brianus de Thorberville, or Bryan Turberville, was lord of the manor, called from its situation on the river Piddle,

and from himself, "Piddle Turberville," and now represented by the little village called Bryan's Piddle.



BERE REGIS: THE TURBERVILLE WINDOW.

At a later period the rising fortunes of this family are attested by their coming into possession of half of the manor of Bere Regis, the other half being, as it had long been, the property of Tarent Abbey.

Still later, when at last that Abbey was dissolved, the Turbervilles were in the enjoyment of good fortune, for the other half of the manor then came to them. This period seems to have marked the summit of their advancement, for from that time they gradually but surely decayed, giving point to the old superstition which dates the decadence of many an old family from that day when it sacrilegiously was awarded the spoils of the Church. This fall from position began in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but D'Albigny Turberville, the oculist who was consulted by Pepys the diarist, and eventually died in 1696, as the tomb to him with the fulsome inscription in Salisbury Cathedral tells us, was a distinguished scion of the ancient race, as also was "George Turberville, gentleman," and poet, born at Winterborne Whitchurch, and publishing books of poems and travels in 1570. These, doubtless, were not forms of distinction that would have commended themselves to those old fighting and land-snatching Turbervilles; but, other times, other manners.

The last Turberville of Bere Regis was that Thomas Turberville over whom the ancient vault of his stock finally closed in 1710. His twin daughters and co-heiresses, Frances and Elizabeth, born here in 1703, sold the property and left for London. They died at Purser's Cross, Fulham, near London, early in 1780, and were buried together at Putney. Shortly afterwards their old manor-house of Bere Regis, standing near the church, was allowed to lapse into ruin, and thus their kin became only a memory where they had ruled so long. Of the old branch of the family settled in Glamorganshire, a Colonel Turberville remains the representative, but

the position of the various rustics who in Dorset and Wilts bear the name, corrupted variously into Tollafield and Troublefield, is open to the suspicion that they are the descendants of illegitimate offspring of that race. There remained, indeed, until quite recent years a humble family of "Torevilles" in Bere Regis, one of whom persisted in calling himself "Sir John." But as Mr. Hardy says, in the course of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, instances of the gradual descent of legitimate scions of the old knightly families, down and again downwards until they have become mere farm-labourers, are not infrequent in Wilts and Dorset. Their high-sounding names have undergone outrageous perversions, as in the stated instance of courtly Paridelle into rustic Priddle ; but, although they have inherited no worldly gear they own the same blood.

CHAPTER XV

THE HEART OF THE HARDY COUNTRY

DORCHESTER is not only the capital of Dorset: it is also the chief town of the Hardy Country. The ancient capital of Wessex was Winchester: the chief seat of this literary domain is here, beside the Frome. Four miles distant from it the novelist was born, and at Max Gate, Fordington, looking down upon Dorchester's roofs, he resides.

The old country life still closely encircles the county town, and on market-days takes the place by storm; so that when, by midday, most of the carriers from a ten or fifteen miles radius have deposited their country folk, and the farmers have come in on horseback, or driving, or perhaps by train, the slighter forms, less ruddy faces, and more urban dress of the townsfolk are lost amid the great army of occupation that from farms, cottages, dairies, and sheep-pastures, has for the rest of the day taken possession of the streets. The talk is all of the goodness or badness of the hay crop, the prospects of the harvest, how swedes are doing, and the condition of cows, sheep, and pigs; or, if it be on toward autumn, when the hiring of farm-labourers, shepherds, and rural servants in general for the next twelve months is the engrossing topic,

then the scarcity of hands and their extravagant demands are the themes of much animated talk.

Dorchester faithfully at such times reflects the image of Dorset, and Dorset remains to this day, and long may it so remain, a great sheep-breeding and grazing county, and equally great as a land of rich dairies. From that suburb of Fordington, which has for so very many centuries been a suburb that to those who

STINSFORD CHURCH: THE "MELLSTOCK" OF "UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE."

know it the name bears no suburban connotation, you may look down, as from a cliff-top, and see the river Frome winding away amid the rich grazing pastures, and with one ear hear the cows calling, while with the other the cries of the newspaper boys are heard in the streets of the town. The scent of the hay and the drowsy hum of the bees break across the top of the bluff, and, just as one may read, in the exquisite description of these things in the pages of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the dandelion

and other winged seeds float in at open windows. One may sometimes from this point, when the foliage of its dense screen of trees grows thin, see Stinsford, the "Mellstock" of that idyllic tale, *Under the Greenwood Tree*; but in general you can see nothing of that sequestered spot until you have reached the by-lane out of the main road from Dorchester, and, turning there to the right, come to Stinsford Church, along a way made a midday twilight by those trees which render the title of that story so descriptive.

Blue wood-smoke, curling up from cottage chimneys against the massed woodlands that surround Kingston House, grey church, largely ivy-covered and plentifully endowed with grotesque gurgoyles—these, with school-house and scattered cottages, make the sum-total of Stinsford, or "Mellstock." The school-house is that of the young school-mistress, Fancy Day, in the story; and suggests romance; but the sentimental pilgrim may be excused for being of opinion that it is all in the book, with perhaps nothing left over for real life. At any rate, passing it, as the scholars within are, like bees, in Mr. Hardy's words, "humming small," one does not linger, but speculates more or less idly which was the cottage where Tranter Dewy lived, and which that of Geoffrey Day, the keeper of Yalbury Great Wood. There are not, after all, many cottages to choose from, and Mr. Hardy has so largely peopled his stories from Mellstock that each one might well be a literary landmark. The Fiddler of the Reels, Mop Ollamoor, a rustic Paganini, whose diabolical cleverness with his violin is the subject of a short story, lived in one of these

thatched homes of rural content, and in another was born unhappy Jude the Obscure. In each one of the rest you can imaginatively find the home of a member of that famous Mellstock choir, whose performances and enthusiasm sometimes rose so "glorious grand" that those who wrought with stringed instruments almost sawed through the strings of fiddle and double-bass, and those others whose weapons were of brass blew upon them until they split the seams of their coats and sent their waistcoat-buttons flying with the force of their fervid harmony, in the cumulative strains of Handel and the dithyrambics of Tate and Brady. "Oh! for such a man in our parish," was thought to be the admiratory attitude of the parson at the *fortissimo* outburst of a minstrel from a neighbouring village, who had taken a turn with the local choir; but the parson's pose was less one of admiration than of startled surprise.

All the members of that harmonious, if at times too vigorous, choir are gone to the land where, let us hope, they are quiring in the white robes and golden crowns usually supposed to be the common wear "up along"; and their instruments are perished too:

> The knight is dust, his sword is rust,
> His soul is with the saints, we trust.

Or, as Mr. Hardy, in *Friends Beyond*, says of his own creations:

> William Dewy, Tranter Reuben,
> Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
> Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
> And the Squire and Lady Susan
> Lie in Mellstock churchyard now.

The clergy, who were responsible for the disappearance of the old choirs, did not succeed at one stroke in sweeping them away, and in many parishes it was not until the leader had died that they broke up the old rustic harmony. "The 'church singers,' who played anthems, with selections 'from Handel, but mostly composed by themselves,' had a position in their parish. They had an admiring congregation. Their afternoon anthem was the theme of conversation at the church porch before the service, and of enquiry and critical disquisition after. 'And did John,' one would ask, 'keep to his time?' 'Samuel was crowding very fitly until his string broked.' This was said after a performance difficult in all the categories in which difficulty—close up even to impossibility—may be found. And there was, I was about to say, a finale, but it seemed endless; it was a concluding portion, and a long one, of the anthem.

"Mary began an introductory recapitulation, in which she was ably followed, of the words, the subject of the composition, the masterpiece of one, or many, if the choir had lent a helping hand. It happened that Mary had to manage three full syllables, and all the cadences, and trills, and quavers connected therewith, as a solo. Then followed, through all the turns of the same intricate piece, Thomas, of tenor voice, who evolved his music, but did not advance to any elucidation of the subject of his concluding effort. He only dwelt upon the same syllables, at which the good minister was seen to smile and become restless, particularly when Jonathan took on with his deep bass voice, accompanied by the tones he drew from his bass-

viol. He, as best suited a bass singer, slowly repeated the syllables that Mary and Thomas had produced in so many ways, and with such a series of intonations, 'OUR—GREAT—SAL.' May some who tittered at this canonisation of, as it were, a female saint, be forgiven!' Had they waited a few minutes, the grand union of all the performers in loud chorus would have enlightened them to the fact that the last syllable was only the first of one of three ending in '*vation*,' which would be loudly repeated by the whole choir till they appeared fairly tired out."

The very last surviving vestige of the old village choirs of the West of England became extinct in 1893. Until then the startled visitor from London, or indeed any other part of a country by that time given over to harmoniums in chapels, cheap and thin organs in small churches, and more full-toned ones in larger, would have found the village choir of Martinstown still bass-viol and fiddle-scraping, flute-blowing, and clarionet-playing, as their forefathers had been wont to do. "Martinstown" is the style by which Wessex folk, not quite equal to the constant daily repetition of the name of Winterborne St. Martin, know that village, a little to the west of Dorchester. It is a considerable place and by no means remote, and it was therefore not the general inaccessibility of Martinstown to modern ideas that caused this survival, when every other parish had put away such things. Martinstown then provided itself with an organ, as understood to-day; and so escaped a middle period to which many another parish fell a victim, between the decay of the old church music and

the adoption of the new. When, about the accession of Queen Victoria, village minstrelsy began to relax, there came in a fashion, or rather a scourge, of mechanical barrel-organs, fitted to play a dozen or fewer, sacred tunes, according to the local purse, or the local requirements. Precisely like secular barrel organs, save only in the matter of the tunes they were constructed to play, church minstrelsy with them not only became mechanical but singularly unvaried, for, when your dozen tunes were played, there was nothing for it—if, like Oliver Twist, the congregation called for more—but to grind the same things over again. The only variety—and that was one not covenanted for—was when portions of the melody-producing works decayed and broke off. A tooth missing from a cog-wheel, or something wrong with the barrel, was apt to give an ungodly twist to the Old Hundredth, calculated to impart a novelty to that ancient stand-by of village churches, and would even have made the air of "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" stream forth in spasms, as though those soldiers were an awkward squad learning some ecclesiastical goose-step. In short, the barrel-organs were not "things seemly and of good report," and they presently died the death.

Many regretted the old order of things, largely destroyed by the current movements in the Church. Reforming High Churchmen had seized upon the signs of weakness exhibited in the old choirs, and had made away with them wherever possible. The rustic music had, as we have seen, its humorous incidents, but it was enthusiastic and was understood and sympathised with by the people. Sur-

pliced choirs, and others, formed as they now commonly are, from classes superior to those of which the old instrumental and vocal choirs were composed, have not that hold upon congregations, who do not sing, as the Prayer-book and the Psalm enjoin, but listen while others do the singing for them.

"Why, daze my old eyes," said a Wessex rustic, reviewing the trend of modern life, "everything's upsey-down. 'Tis, if ye want this and if ye want that, put yer hand in yer pocket and goo an' git some'un to do't for ye, or goo to the Stowers (he meant the Stores) up to Do'chester, and buy yer 'taters and have'm sint home for 'ee, cheaper'n ye can grow'm, let be the back-breakin' work of a hoein' of 'em, and a diggin' of 'em and a clanin' of 'em. An' talking of church, why bless 'ee, tidden no manner of good yer liftin' up yer v'ice glad-like, an' makkin' a cheerful noise onto the Lord, as we'm bidden to do. Not a bit. Ef ye do't passon looks all of a pelt, and they boys in their nightshirts sets off a-sniggerin' and they tells yer ye bissen much of a songster, they ses."

It has already been said that the instruments, as well as the old village players of them, have perished, but at least one specimen of that oddly named instrument, the "serpent," frequently mentioned by Mr. Hardy, has survived. This example is in the possession of Messrs. H. Potter & Co., of West Street, Charing Cross Road. The serpent belongs to such a past order of things that, like the rebecs, dulcimers, and shawms of Scriptural references, it requires explanation.

The "serpent," then, it may be learned, although

invented by one Guillaume so far back as the close of the sixteenth century, first came into general use in the early part of the eighteenth. It was a wind instrument, the precursor of the bass horn, or ophicleide, which in its turn has been superseded by the valved bass brasses of the present day. The serpent of course owed its name to its contorted shape. It was generally made of wood, covered with leather, and stained black, and ranged in length from about twenty-nine to thirty-three inches. The earlier form of serpent had but six holes, but these were gradually increased, and keyed, until this now obsolete instrument, as improved by Key, of London, about the beginning of the nineteenth century, finally became possessed of seventeen keys. It went out of use, contemporaneously with the decay of the old village choirs, about 1830.

The geographical area of the heart of the Hardy Country is not very great, but the difficulties of finding one's way about it are not small. The Vale of Great Dairies opens out, and the many runnels of the Frome make the byways so winding that to clearly know whither one is going demands the use of a very large-scale Ordnance Map. But to lose one's self here is no disaster. You will find your way out again, and in the meanwhile will have come into intimate touch with dairying, and perhaps, if it be early summer, will find the barns and the water-side busy with sheepshearers. Seeing the dexterous shearing, the quick, practised movements of the men and the panting helplessness of the sheep, one is reminded of the similar scene in *Far from the Madding Crowd.*

Away across the Frome is the rustic, out-of-the-

way village of West Stafford, which has a little one-aisled church, still displaying the royal arms of the time of Queen Elizabeth with that semée of lilies, the empty boast of a sovereignty over France, which, to the contemplative and sentimental student of history is as pitiful a make-believe as that of penury apeing affluence. "That glorious *Semper Eadem*," motto, "our banner and our pride," as Macaulay says, looks a little flatulent in these circumstances of a relaxed grasp.

The long rhymed inscription outside an off-licence beerhouse in the village, displaying the Hardyean phrase of "a cup of genuine" for a glass of ale, is a curiosity in its way—

> I trust no Wise Man will condemn
> A Cup of Genuine now and then.
> When you are faint, your spirits low,
> Your string relaxed 'twill bend your Bow,
> Brace your Drumhead and make you tight,
> Wind up your Watch and set you right:
> But then again the too much use
> Of all strong liquors is the abuse.
> Tis liquid makes the solid loose,
> The Texture and whole frame Destroys,
> But health lies in the Equipoise.

Resuming the north bank of the Frome, and the road to Tincleton, a left-hand turning is seen leading across to Piddletown, by way of Lower and Upper Bockhampton—hamlets rustic to the last degree, and, by reason of being quite remote from any road the casual stranger is likely to take, unknown to the outside world. Yet the second of these, the thatched and tree-embowered hamlet of Upper Bockhampton, has the keenest interest for the

explorer of the Hardy Country, for it was here, in the rustic, thatched cottage still occupied by members of the Hardy family, that Thomas Hardy, novelist and poet, was born, June 2nd, 1840. It is a fitting spot for the birthplace of one who has described nature as surely it has never before been described, has pictured the moods of earth and sky, and has

BIRTHPLACE OF THOMAS HARDY.
"*On the edge of the wild.*"

heard and given new significances to the voices of birds and trees, by the stubborn and intractable method of prose-writing.

The cottage stands—its front almost hid from sight in the dense growths of its old garden and by the slope of the downs—at the extreme upper end of Upper Bockhampton, on the edge of the wild,

called, with a fine freedom of choice, Bockhampton or Piddletown Heath, and Thorneycombe or Ilsington

BIRTHPLACE OF THOMAS HARDY.

"Its walls, with small latticed windows, look sheer upon a lane leading into the heart of the woodland."

Woods. You enter its garden up steep, rustic steps, and find its low-ceiled rooms stone-flagged and criss-crossed with beams. At the back, its walls, with

small latticed windows, look sheer upon a lane leading into the heart of the woodland ; where, so little are strangers expected or desired that the tree-trunks bear notice-boards detailing what shall be done to those who trespass. Branches of these enshrining trees touch the thatched roof and scrape the walls, and the voices of the wind and of the woodlands reverberate from them ; and when the sun goes down, the nocturnal orchestra of owls and nightingales strikes up. It is an ideal spot for the birth of one whose genius and bent are largely in the interpretation of nature ; but it must not be forgotten that the chances are always against the observation and appreciation of scenes amidst which a child has been born and reared, and that only exceptional receptivity can throw off the usual effect of staleness and lack of interest in things usual and accustomed. It is thus in the nature of things that the townsman generally takes a keener interest in the country than those native to it, and the dweller in the mushroom cities of commerce finds more in a cathedral city than many of those living within the shadow of the Minster ever suspect. This is to say, parabolically, what we all know, that the nature of the seer is an exceptional nature, and rises superior to the dulling effects of use and wont: unaccountable as the winds that blow, and not to be analysed or predicated by any literary meteorological department.

Returning through Lower Bockhampton, on the way to Tincleton, a ridge is presently seen on the left hand, crowned with fir-trees, and a little questing will reveal a rush-grown pool, the original of Heedless William's Pond, mentioned in *The*

Fiddler of the Reels. Beyond this landmark, a cottage that fills the position of "Bloom's End" in *The Return of the Native*, is seen, and on the right-hand side the farmstead of Norris Mill Farm, where, overlooking the Vale of Great Dairies, is the original of Talbothays, the dairy where Angel Clare, learning the business from Dairyman Crick, met Tess. Below the grassy bluff on whose sides the farm-buildings stand may be traced the fertilising course of the Frome, or as Mr. Hardy calls it, the

THE "DUCK" INN, ORIGINAL OF THE "QUIET WOMAN" INN IN THE "RETURN OF THE NATIVE."

Var:—"The Var waters were clear as the pure River of Life shown to the Evangelist rapid as the shadow of a cloud, with pebbly shadows that prattled to the sky all day long. There the water-flower was the lily."

This land of fat kine and water-meads, to the south of the road, is neighboured to the northward by the outlying brown and purple stretches of Egdon Heath, into whose wilds we shall presently come. "Bloom's End," or a house that may well

stand for it, we have noticed, and now come upon a humble little farm on the right hand, standing with front to the road and facing upon a strikingly gloomy heather-covered hill. This is the house, once the "Duck" inn, which figures in *The Return of the Native* as the "Quiet Woman" inn, kept by Damon Wildeve, who, a failure as an engineer, made a worse shipwreck of life here. As described in the novel, a little patch of land has by dint of supreme exertions been reclaimed from the grudging soil:

"Wildeve's Patch, as it was called, a plot of land redeemed from the heath, and after long and laborious years brought into cultivation. The man who had discovered that it could be tilled died of the labour: the man who succeeded him in possession ruined himself in fertilising it. Wildeve came like Amerigo Vespucci, and received the honours due to those who had gone before."

A casual talk with the small farmer who has taken the place reveals the fact that this soil is a hard taskmaster and yields a poor recompense. The heathery hill facing it is described exactly as it is in nature:

"The front of the house was towards the heath and Rainbarrow, whose dark shape seemed to threaten it from the sky. . . ."

"It was a barrow. This bossy projection of earth above its natural level occupied the loftiest ground of the loneliest height that the heath contained. Although from the vale it appeared but as a wart on an Atlantean brow, its actual bulk was great. It formed the pole and axis of this heathery world."

The soil at the back of the house is better, which indeed it could well be without being even then particularly good. It slopes towards the river, at what is described in the book as "Shadwater Weir," where the drowned bodies of Wildeve and Eustacia were found :

"The garden was at the back, and behind this ran a still deep stream."

The village of Tincleton, the "Stickleford" of casual mention in some of the short stories, is one of about a dozen cottages, clustering round a little

TINCLETON.

church and school ; and with presumably a few dozen more dwellings in the neighbourhood of the wide common on which Tincleton stands, to account for the existence of that school and that church. Past it and Pallington, whose hill and hilltop firs, known as Pallington Clump, are conspicuous for great distances, we turn to the left and explore a portion of Egdon Heath towards Bryan's Piddle and Bere Regis. Everywhere the wilds now stretch forth and seem to bid defiance to the best efforts of the cultivator, but down at the hamlet of Hurst, where water is plentiful, there is an ancient red-brick farm

of superior aspect, and yet with a thatched roof —an effect oddly like that which might be produced by a gentleman wearing a harvester's hat. It is obviously an old manor-house, and besides showing evidences of former state, has two substantial brick entrance piers surmounted by what country folk, in their native satire, call "gentility balls."

Such gentility in the neighbourhood of wild, uncanny Egdon wears, as Mr. Hardy would say, "an anomalous look." The heath is more akin with Adam than with his descendants :

"This obscure, obsolete, superseded country figures in Domesday. Its condition is recorded therein as that of heathy, furzy, briary wilderness—'Bruaria.' Then follows the length and breadth in leagues ; and, though some uncertainty exists as to the exact extent of this ancient lineal measure, it appears from the figures that the area of Egdon down to the present day has but little diminished. 'Turbaria Bruaria'—the right of cutting heath-turf—occurs in charters relating to the district. 'Overgrown with heth and mosse,' says Leland of the same dark sweep of country."

"Here at least were intelligible facts regarding the landscape—far-reaching proofs productive of genuine satisfaction. The untamable Ishmaelitish thing that Egdon now was it always had been. Civilisation was its enemy ; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes. A person on a heath in raiment of modern cut and colours has more or less an anomalous

look. We seem to want the oldest and simplest human clothing where the clothing of the earth is so primitive."

Here, if anywhere in this poor old England of ours, generally over-populated and sorted over, raked about, and turned inside out, there is quiet and solitude. No recent manifestations of the way the world wags, no advertisement hoardings, no gasometers or mean suburbs intrude upon the inviolable heath. No one has yet suspected coal beneath

AN EGDON FARMSTEAD.

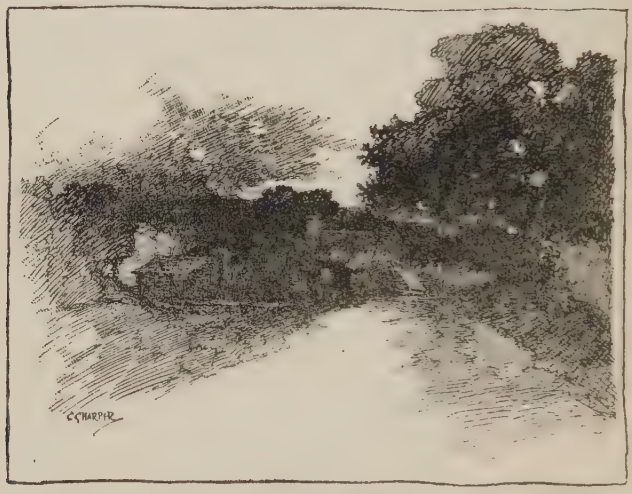
the shaggy frieze coat of this remote vestige of an earlier age, and its vitals have therefore not been probed and dragged forth. A railway skirts it, 'tis true, but only on the way otherwhere, and no network of sidings has yet made a gridiron of its unexploited waste. Elsewhere trim hedges or fences of barbed-wire restrain the explorer, but here he is free to roam, and may so roam until he has fairly lost himself.

It is a land wholly antithetic from the bubbling superficial feelings of cities, and has the

introspective, self-communing air of the solitary. A town-bred man,

> "Heart-halt and spirit-lame,
> City-opprest,"

and wearied with the weariful reek of the streets, the jostling of the pavements, and the intolerable



A FARM ON EGDON.

numbers of his kind, might come to a spell of recluse life in a farm on Egdon, and there rid him of that supersaturation of humanity; returning at last to his streets with a new spirit, a brisker step, and a revived hope in the right ordering of the world. So much Egdon can do for such an one.

I know just such a farm, in the dip of the yellow road, its thatched roofs and the near trees taking on a homely, comfortable look when night

closes down upon the wild, when its windows are lit with a welcome ray as the sun goes down, in an angry glory in the west. This is, to me, the heart of the Hardy Country, and its surroundings seem most closely to fit his imaginings. The place has just that personality he gives his farmsteads, and the wastes near it wear sometimes just that cold indifference to humanity, and at others precisely that ogreish hostility, he in his pagan way describes.

Halting here, as the sun goes down, and the landscape changes from its daylight browns and purples to an irradiated orange, and through the siennas and umbers of an etching, to the blackness of night, I feel that here resides the *genius loci*, the Spirit of the Heath.

CHAPTER XVI

DORCHESTER TO CROSS-IN-HAND, MELBURY, AND YEOVIL

A GOOD many outlying literary landmarks of the Wessex novels may be cleared up by leaving Dorchester by Charminster, and then, at a fork in the road just past Wolveton, taking the left-hand turning and following for awhile the valley road along the course of the river Frome. Not for long, however, if it is desired to keep strictly to those landmarks, do we pursue this easy course, for in another couple of miles, by Grimstone station, we shall have to bear to the right hand and make for what is known in Mr. Hardy's pages as "Long Ash Lane," along whose almost interminable course Farmer Darton and his friend rode, to the wooing of Sally Hall, at Great Hintock, in that short story, *Interlopers at the Knap*.

Long Ash Lane—in some editions of the novels styled "Holloway Lane—is the middle one of three roads past Grimstone station. Those on either side lead severally to Maiden Newton—the "Chalk Newton" of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*—and to Sydling St. Nicholas; but this is, as described in that story, "a monotonous track, without a village or hamlet for many miles, and with very seldom a

turning." For its own sake, it will therefore be easily seen, Long Ash Lane is not an altogether desirable route. It is an ancient Roman road, running eventually to Yeovil and Ilchester ; passing near by, but not touching, and always out of sight of several small villages on its lengthy way. Darton and Johns found it weariful as they rode, the hedgerow twigs on either side "currycombing their whiskers," as Mr. Hardy delightfully says ; and wayfarers on foot, tired out, believe at last that it will never end :

"Unapprised wayfarers, who are too old, or too young, or in other respects too weak for the distance to be traversed, but who, nevertheless, have to walk it, say, as they look wistfully ahead : "Once at the top of that hill, and I must surely see the end of Long Ash Lane!" But they reach the hill-top, and Long Ash Lane stretches in front mercilessly as before."

After many miles this tiresome road at last comes in touch with modern life, for Evershot station and the hamlet of Holywell are placed directly beside it. Here we may turn right, or turn left, or go onward, sure in all directions of finding many scenes to be identified with the novels. Turning to the right, a road not altogether dissimilar in its loneliness from Long Ash Lane is found, but differing from it in the one essential respect of ascending the ridge of lofty downs overlooking the Vale of Blackmoor, and thus, while to the right hand disclosing a dull expanse of table-land, on the left opening out a romantic view, bounded only by distance and the inadequacies of human eyesight. This is the road along which Tess was

travelling—in the reverse direction—from Dole's Ash Farm at Plush, the "Flintcombe Ash" of those tragical pages, to Beaminster or "Emminster," to visit the parents of Angel Clare, her husband, when she came to that ill-fated meeting with Alec D'Urberville at the spot we now approach, Cross-in-Hand :

"At length the road touched the spot called 'Cross-in-Hand.' Of all spots on the bleached and desolate upland this was the most forlorn. It was so far removed from the charm which is sought in landscape by artists and view-lovers as to reach a new kind of beauty, a negative beauty of tragic tone. The place took its name from a stone pillar which stood there, a strange rude monolith, from a stratum unknown in any local quarry, on which was roughly carved a human hand."

The history and meaning of this lonely pillar on the solitary ridgeway road are unknown. Thought by some to mark the old-time bounds of property under the sway of the Abbot of Cerne, others have considered it to be the relic of a wayside cross, while others yet have held it to be a place of meeting of the tenants and feudatories of the old abbey, and the hollow in the stone to have been the receptacle for their tribute. But, "whatever the origin of the relic, there was and is something sinister, or solemn, according to mood, in the scene amid which it stands ; something tending to impress the most phlegmatic passer-by."

Here it was that Tess, on her way to Flintcombe Ash, was surprised by the converted Alec D'Urberville, already shaken in his new-found grace and preaching mission at sight of her, and here he made

CROSS-IN-HAND.

"The scene of a miracle, or murder, or both. The place took its name from a stone pillar which stood there, a strange rude monolith, from a stratum unknown in any local quarry, on which was roughly carved a human hand."

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her swear upon it never to tempt him by her charms or ways. "This was once a Holy Cross," said he. "Relics are not in my creed, but I fear you at moments." It was not very reassuring to Tess when, leaving the spot of this singular rencounter and asking a rustic if the stone were not a Holy Cross, he replied, "Cross—no; 'twer not a cross! 'Tis a thing of ill-omen, miss. It was put up in wuld times by the relations of a malefactor, who was

BATCOMBE.

"The sequestered village . . . . a place of marvellous legends."

tortured there by nailing his hand to a post and afterwards hung. The bones lie underneath. They say he sold his soul to the devil, and that he walks at times."

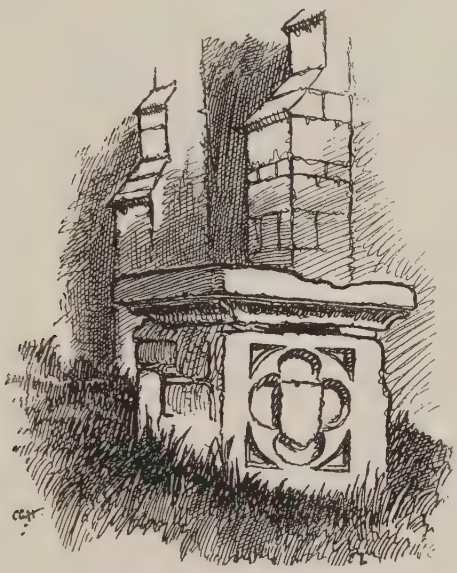
This pillar, "the scene of a miracle or murder, or both," stands some five feet in height, and rises from the unfenced grassy selvedge of the road, where the blackberry bushes and bracken grow, on the verge of the down that breaks precipitously away to the vale where Yetminster lies. The rude

bowl-shaped capital of the mystic stone has the coarse semblance of a hand, displayed in the manner of the Bloody Hand of Ulster.

Deep down below, in midst of the narrowest lanes, lies the sequestered village of Batcombe, from which this down immediately above takes its name. The church stands almost in the shadow of the hills. This also is a place of marvellous legends, for a battered old Gothic tomb in the churchyard, innocent of inscription, standing near the north wall of the church, is, according to old tales the resting-place of one "Conjuring Minterne," a devil-compeller and astrologer of sorts, who was originally buried half in and half out of the church, for fear his master, "the horny man," as a character in one of Mr. Hardy's romances calls Old Nick, should have him, if buried otherwise. One would like to learn more about "Conjuring Minterne" and his strange tricks, but history is silent.

Returning to Evershot, or, as it is styled in the sources of our pilgrimage, "Evershead," we come to Melbury Park, the seat of the Earl of Ilchester, and the principal scene of that charming story, *The First Countess of Wessex*, in the collection of "A Group of Noble Dames." The great house of oddly diversified architecture, stands in the midst of this nobly wooded and strikingly varied domain, but can readily be seen, for the carriage-drive is a public right of way. This is the broad roadway through the park described in the passage where Tupcombe, riding towards "King's Hintock Court" —as Mr. Hardy disguises the identity of the place—from Mells, on Squire Dornell's errand, saw it stretching ahead "like an unrolled deal shaving."

Like most of the stories of those noble dames, this romance of Betty Dornell, the First Countess of Wessex, is founded upon actual people, and largely upon their real doings. Squire Dornell of Falls Park—really Mells Park—was in real life that Thomas Horner who in 1713 married Susannah



TOMB OF "CONJURING MINTERNE."

Strangways, heiress of the Strangways family and owner of Melbury Sampford ; and their only child was Elizabeth, born in 1723, who in 1736, in her thirteenth year, almost precisely as in the story, was married to Stephen Fox, afterwards Earl of Ilchester, who died in 1776. The Countess died in 1792.

But this passage of family history is best set forth in the manner customary to genealogists:

Thomas Horner of Mells *m.* 1713 Susannah, daughter of Thomas Strangways, of Melbury, co. Dorset, born 1690, died 1758.

Elizabeth Horner, Born 1723, Died 1792. *m.* 1736 Sir Stephen Fox, afterwards 1st Earl of Ilchester, etc. Born 1706, Died 1776.

The father of the first Countess of Wessex was, it is curious to know, descended from Little Jack Horner, that paragon of selfishness who sat in a corner, eating his Christmas pie, and who, the familiar nursery rhyme goes on to tell us,

> "Put in his thumb and pulled out a plum,
> And said, What a good boy am I!"

The nursery rhyme was that, and something more. It was, in fact a satire upon that John Horner who, upon the dissolution of the monasteries, purchased for much less than it was worth the confiscated Mells estate of Glastonbury Abbey. This prize, the "plum" of the rhyme, is said to have been worth £10,000. The Horners, represented by Sir John Horner, espoused the side of the Parliament in the war with Charles I. but they have kept their plum, at every hazard and in all chances, and Mells Park is still in the family.

Leland tells how the house of Melbury Park was built in the sixteenth century by Sir Giles Strangways, but portions of the great T-shaped building have at later times been added, notably the wing built in the time of Queen Anne. The whole heterogeneous pile, dominated by a church-like, six-sided central

MELBURY HOUSE.

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tower, occupies a raised grassy site looking upon a lake on whose opposite shore is the little manorial church of Melbury Sampford, plentifully stored with monuments of Strangways and Fox-Strangways, and in especial notable for that to the courtly and equable husband of Betty Dornell. His epitaph, by the hand of his widow, describes him as the most desirable of husbands.

Near this stone is interred
Stephen, Earl of Ilchester,
who died at Melbury
Sept. 26, A.D. MDCCLXXVI., aged LXXII.
He was the eighth son of Sir Stephen Fox, knight.
He married Elizabeth, only daughter of Thomas Horner,
of Mells, in the county of Somerset, esquire,
heiress-general to the family of
Strangways of Melbury, in the county of Dorset,
by whom he had Henry Thomas, his eldest son,
now Earl of Ilchester
(who succeeds him in honours and estate)
and a numerous offspring.
As a small token of her great affection
to the best of husbands, fathers, friends,
his disconsolate widow inscribes this marble,
Sacred to his memory.

Hush'd be the voice of bards who heroes praise,
And high o'er glory's sun their pæans raise;
And let an artless Muse a friend review,
Whose tranquil Life one blameless tenour knew.
By Nature form'd to please, of happiest mien,
Just, friendly, chearful, affable, serene;
Engaging Manners, cultivated Mind,
Adorn'd by Letters and in Courts refin'd,
His blooming honours long approv'd he bore,
And added lustre to that gem he wore;
Grac'd with all pow'rs to shine, he left parade,
And unambitious lov'd the sylvan shade;

> The choice by Heav'n applauded stood confess'd
> And all his Days with all its blessing bless'd;
> Living belov'd, lamented in his end,
> Unfading Bliss his mortal change attend.

At the other extremity of the park is the small and secluded village of Melbury Osmund, the "Little Hintock" of *The Woodlanders*, "one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world, where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listnessness than meditation." It lies among vast hills and profound hollows, whose huge convexities and corresponding concavities render this a district to be more comfortably ridden by the horseman than walked, and one to be explored by the cyclist only with great and exhausting labour.

By perspiring perseverance, however, Yeovil and Somerset, or, speaking by the card, "Ivell" and "Outer Wessex" may be reached at last, by way of the strangely-entitled village of Ryme Intrinsica, whose name, so spelled on the map, is, with considerable incertitude both as to spelling and meaning, said to be properly written "Entrenseca" or "Entrensicca." Local theories, disregarding altogether the inexplicable "Ryme," and expending themselves upon the preposterous Latinity of the second part of the name, have come to some sort of agreement that it denotes a dry place on a ridge placed between two watered vales; and those curious enough to look for it on a large-scale map will perceive readily enough that, whatever the comparative dryness of the ridge it does occupy, it is certainly so flanked by the low-lying lands in which flow two tributaries of the river Yeo.

Hutchins, the county historian, on the other hand, gives a wholly different explanation of the name. Spelling the "Intrinseca" with an "e," instead of the final "i," he says it is so called, Ryme Intrinseca, or "In Ryme," in contradistinction to an outlying portion of the old manor, away down in the parish of Long Bredy, and styled Ryme Extrinsecus, or "Out Ryme."

At any rate, Ryme Intrinsica looks scarcely the place to be dolled out in so classical a style. It is too Saxon, too rustic and homespun in all its circumstances of thatch, rickyards, dairies, and pigsties; and its little church is not in any way corroborative of this dignity.

Yeovil, whose name has so bucolic a sound that it would seem to be, above all other places, the home most suitable for yeomen, is the "Ivell" of the Wessex novels, but finds only scattered allusions in them, and touches far from intimate. Cope, the curate, who in the story *For Conscience' Sake* married the conscience-smitten Millborne's daughter when at last the father effaced himself, was curate at Ivell; and it was at the "Castle" inn of the same town that the brothers Halborough called for their drunken father, in the harrowing embarrassments of *A Tragedy of two Ambitions*, but those are the nearest approaches to be discovered.

CHAPTER XVII

SHERBORNE

Much remains in pleasant Sherborne to tell of that time when it was a cathedral city, and when, after it had lost that high dignity, it was of scarce less importance as the home of a powerful Abbey. It was the pleasing, well-watered and sheltered situation, in the vale where the little Yeo or Ivel runs—the stream which, passing through Yeovil, gives that town its name—that first attracted the religious in A.D. 705, the time of that now misty and vague monarch, King Ina. The Yeo had not yet obtained that name, and was merely spoken of in descriptive and admiratory phrase as the *Scir burne*, an Anglo-Saxon description for a bright and clear brook which has crystallised here and at several other places in the country, into a place-name. Even in the City of London there is a Sherborne Lane, where no stream now flows, the successor, however, of a pleasant lane, where in Anglo-Saxon times a tributary of the Wall Brook flowed.

Not every one was satisfied with this choice for a cathedral site. William of Malmesbury wrote of it as "pleasant neither by multitudes of inhabitants, nor beauty of position." But beauty is a matter of individual taste. "Wonderful, almost

shameful," he continued, "was it, that a bishop's see should have remained here for so many years." For three hundred and three years it so remained, the bishop's seat being removed only in 1078, when Old Sarum, a much more inconvenient site, sterile, cramped and waterless—a place that to the Saxons was Searobyrig, the dry city—was selected, only itself to be abandoned in less than another hundred and fifty years. In the meanwhile no fewer than twenty-seven bishops ruled in succession at Sherborne and passed into the Great Beyond, leaving for the most part, very little evidence of their existence. Notable exceptions, however, were Adhelm, an early translator of the Scriptures, and Asser, whose biography of his friend and patron, Alfred the Great, is a monument to himself as well as to his subject. In the choir-aisles of the existing Abbey-church are sundry relics of those prelates, in the shape of ancient tombs with battered effigies, as near a likeness to them as possible for the sculptors to produce ; and in the retro-choir are pointed out the spots where Kings Ethelbald and Ethelbert, brothers and predecessors of King Alfred, lie.

After an interval of uncertainty following the removal of the bishopric in 1078 to Old Sarum, the cathedral here was in 1139 made a Benedictine Abbey and rebuilt by Roger, Bishop of Sarum, who although he might not again remove the cathedral back to Sherborne, seems to have loved the place, and certainly lavished much care and labour upon it.

Bishop Roger was a man of energy and determination. Starting in life as a poor Norman monk,

he owed his first important preferment to a curious circumstance. None could gabble through a mass more speedily than he, and he raced through a service before Henry I. so quickly, while the king was anxious to be off a-hunting, that the gratified monarch put him on the broad high road to advancement, along whose course Roger travelled far. But, if all had liked him as little as did the censorious William of Malmesbury, his journeys would have been short. To that chronicler he was "unscrupulous, fierce and avaricious," not content to keep his own, but eager to grab the goods of others. "Was there anything contiguous to his property which might be advantageous to him, he would directly extort it, either by entreaty or purchase, or, if that failed, by force." It must have been well, therefore, to arrange terms with this masterful personage while he was in the negotiating way, lest he took what he wanted, without so much as a "by-your-leave." The great Norman structure he erected has largely survived, not only in its ground plan, but in the essential circumstances of its walling, for although it is outwardly a building in the Perpendicular phase of Gothic, dating from the second half of the fifteenth century, that magnificently-elaborated external show of nave and presbytery is but a later and more enriched surface, daringly grafted upon the stern and solemn Norman walls of over three hundred years' earlier date.

The history of the great Benedictine Abbey of Sherborne very clearly retells the old tale of Bury St. Edmunds, of Norwich, and of many another great monastic centre, by which you see that these

rich and powerful settlements of the religious were not generally at peace with the outside worldlings. The causes of quarrel were many. In some places the monastery was a harsh and exacting landlord; in others the imposts and hindrances placed upon the markets, whose tolls in many instances were the property of the Church, aroused bitter enmity and constant strife; and in yet more cases the maintenance of forests and game for the sport of the Lords Abbots gave rise to trouble. Poachers we have had always with us, and even in those times when to kill the stag in the Chases was a crime adjudged worthy death or mutilation, men for sport or sustenance illegally slew the game. "What shall he have who killed the deer?" Why, an ear cut off or a nose slit, at the very least of it.

Here at Sherborne the bitterest quarrel arose from other causes. It seems that the parish church was situated at the west end of the Abbey, separated from it only by a door which the monks, exclusives always, had sought gradually to narrow, with a view of eventually blocking it up altogether. A question nearly allied with this was whether the children of the townsfolk should be baptised in the Abbey or in the parish church, and the disputes at last grew so raw that the Sherborne burgesses, very wrothy and spiteful, took to ringing their church-bells so long and so loudly that on account of the clamour, the monastic offices could not be carried on. In 1437 the points at issue were by common consent laid before the Bishop of Salisbury, who, siding with his own cloth, made an award in favour of the Abbey. Regarding this decision as an

injustice, the townsfolk refused to abide by it; but there were evidently two parties in the town, for one faction, headed by a stalwart butcher, broke into the parish church with some of the monks and reduced the font to fragments. Things then, naturally grew worse, until, as Leland puts it, "The variance grew to a plain sedition, until a priest of the town church of All Hallows shot a shaft with fire into the top of that part of the Abbey Church of St. Mary that divided the east part that the monks used from that the townsmen used; and this partition happening at the time to be thatched in, the roof was set on fire, and consequently the whole church, the lead and bells melted, was defaced."

The Choir was so seriously injured that it was taken down and rebuilt, but the rest was repaired, and still in some parts shows traces, in the reddened patches on the beautiful golden-yellow Ham Hill sandstone of the internal walls, of the conflagration.

The townsfolk were made to contribute heavily to the cost of repair and rebuilding; works resulting in a more lovely interior, both in form and colour, than owned by any other considerable church in the west. A commonplace person, one no connoisseur of churches, if asked to convey a general sense of their interiors by the medium of temperature would reply that they were cold, for coldness is the effect most often produced—irrespective of the degrees registered by the thermometer—by their stonework; but here, though the mercury shrink down from the tube into close proximity with the bulb, provocative in most places of shivers, even the most matter-of-fact, irresponsive to the call of soaring arches,

painted windows and delicately poised fretted roof to "lift up your hearts, O Zion!" feel a grateful sensation of warmth pervading them, apparently radiating from these walls of richly hued stone, whose natural colouring seems to fully furnish the place and render it indifferent to the rigours of the season. It is a colour compact of all the beautiful hues of this country of a rich and bountiful Nature: of honey, of apples and pears golden and russet, of autumn leaves, and of cider and October ale, with a glint of the sun through it all. It gives a beautiful and cheerful tone, quick to purge melancholy and to make the devout happier in their hallelujahs than when in the cold, if chaste, companionship of Portland stone, the mild cream purity of the oolite of Bath, the Gregorian richness of the building stone of Mansfield, or the solemn satisfaction engendered by the deep red sandstone of Devon.

The exquisite fan-vaulting of Sherborne Abbey, the finest example of that supremest effort of the last stage of Gothic art, has no superior elsewhere. That of Henry VII.'s Chapel at Westminster, and that in St. George's Chapel at Windsor, are on a larger scale, and more daring, but, although generally cited as representative, are not so truly artistic.

The old Pack-Monday fair, still an annual institution at Sherborne, is a two days' market, originating with the completion of the repairs and the vaulting of the nave, under Abbot Peter de Ramsam, or Rampisham, in 1504. Tradition has it that, the last stone well and truly laid and the great church at last again in order, the masons and their

kind were paid off and bidden depart by midnight on the Sunday after Old Michaelmas Day. Accordingly, Pack-Monday fair is opened every year at the stroke of midnight on the Sunday succeeding October 10th, to the accompaniment of a din of horn-blowing and the uncouth banging of tin cans.

Much of the beauty of the Abbey interior is due to the loving care of the restoration executed by the Digbys of Sherborne Castle, between 1848 and 1858, at a cost of over £32,000. The church of All Hallows at the west end, which caused all the trouble, was demolished after the dissolution of the monastery, when the Abbey was sold to the town for use as a parish church and All Hallows itself thereby became a redundancy. Its situation and its ground-plan can still be traced on the paths and lawns and on the ragged walls and makeshift patchwork that serve as West Front to the Abbey.

An ancestor of the restoring Digbys is commemorated by a pretentious mountain of marble in the south transept, with an epitaph, written by a bishop, setting forth with much antithetical rhodomontade his many virtues of activities and renunciations :

"Here Lyes John, Lord Digby, Baron Digby of Sherborne and Earl of Briſtol. Titles to which ye merit of his Grandfather firſt gave luſtre And which he himſelf laid down unfully'd. He was naturally enclined to avoid the Hurry of a publick Life, Yet carefull to keep up the port of his Quality. Was willing to be at eaſe, but ſcorned obſcurity. And therefore never made his retirement a pretence to draw Himſelf within a narrower

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SHERBORNE ABBEY CHURCH.

"The ragged walls and makeshift patchwork that serve as West Front to the Abbey."

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compaſs, or to ſhun ſuch expence As Charity, Hospitality and his Honour call'd for. His Religion was that which by Law is Eſtabliſhed, and the Conduct of his life ſhew'd the power of it in his Heart. His distinction from others never made him forget himſelf or them. He was kind and obliging to his Neighbours, generous and condeſcending to his inferiours, and juſt to all Mankind. Nor had the temptations of honour and pleaſure in this world Strength enough to withdraw his Eyes from that great Object of his hope, which we reaſonably aſſure ourſelves he now enjoys.

MDCICVIII."

The surroundings of the Abbey closely resemble cathedral precincts, and lead the well-informed stranger to remember that Sherborne cherishes hopes of some day being again erected into the head of a bishop's see, when that talked-of formation of a new diocese, carved out of the great territorial domains of Salisbury and of Bath and Wells, shall be an accomplished fact.

The usual and properest way of coming to the Abbey, after you have glimpsed the fine picture it makes looking down Long Street, is past the Conduit—usually called the Monks' Conduit—standing on the pavement of Cheap Street, and through a time-worn archway and a narrow alley of small shops and old houses. The Conduit, built about 1360, an open octangular building greatly resembling a market-cross, was originally in the centre of the cloister-garth, to the north of the Abbey, on a part of the site now occupied by the admirable Grammar School, founded by

Edward VI. from the spoils of the dissolved monastery, and grown in these days to be one of the foremost schools of the country.

Cheap Street, the principal thoroughfare of Sherborne, is, like similar business streets in other West Country towns, composed of houses of many periods and all sizes. It is built generally of that sunny Ham Hill ferruginous sandstone, quarried for many years at Stoke-sub-Hamdon, six miles to the north-west of Yeovil. That fine old hostelry, the "New Inn," now swept away, was built of it. This vanished house was the original of the "Earl of Wessex," in *The Woodlanders*, in whose yard Giles Winterborne is observed by his old sweetheart from the balcony, while he is engaged with the business of cider-making :

"The chief hotel at Sherton Abbas was the 'Earl of Wessex'—a large stone-fronted inn with a yawning arch under which vehicles were driven by stooping coachmen to back premises of wonderful commodiousness. The windows to the street were mullioned into narrow lights, and only commanded a view of the opposite houses."

The castle, some distance outside the town to east, adjoining the village of Castleton, was originally the combined palace and fortress of the Bishops of Sherborne. The remaining fragments, on their woody knoll overlooking the Yeo, in what is now Sherborne Park, are those of the stout keep built by that ambitious, and unscrupulous Bishop Roger, of Henry I.'s time. Despite the curse, called down by the equally ferocious and saintly Osmund, upon any who should dare to alienate the castle from the bishops of Sherborne, it was wrested from them

on several occasions, perphaps sometimes in direct unbelieving challenge to that *quis separabit*; at others, certainly, because, in the fashion of the times, the bishops had taken part in the political troubles, the pitched battles and weary sieges of contending factions, and, having the ill-luck to side with the defeated party, suffered with them in body and estate. For over two hundred years, from 1139 to 1355, it was thus alienated, and Osmund's curse slept. Those who owned the castle were not executed, or imprisoned, or made to suffer beyond the usual mediæval average, perhaps because it took no account of developments arising from mitred follies and errors of judgment. At last, having been Crown property for many generations, the stronghold and its surrounding lands were granted to Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, from whom, after a futile proposal had been made to fight him for it, in gage of single combat—a fourteenth-century example of Kingsley's "muscular Christianity"—it was purchased by the bishop for 2,500 marks; a cheap lot. Whether the earl, in Etonian phrase, "funked it," imagining the bishop's steel would be fellow to "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and as invincible, who shall say? At any rate, Bishop Wyvil, this strenuous champion, who feared neither the ordeal of the sword nor of the purse, entered into the gates of his predecessors of old time, and died here, after a residence of twenty years. The brass to his memory, in the north-east transept of Salisbury Cathedral, displays a representation of Sherborne Castle, with a figure of the bishop's champion armed with a battle axe, by which it will be seen that it was not scandalously, in his own proper person,

that the bishop was prepared to fight, but by a deputy, skilled in arms, and supported by the ghostly terrors of that ancient curse.

And so, in the possession of the bishops of Salisbury who, to all intents and purposes, and within the meaning of old Oswald, were successors and representatives of the Bishops of Sherborne, the castle remained until 1540, when, in the dissolution of religious houses, it was seized and afterwards granted to the Lord Protector, the Duke of Somerset. Then the curse seems to have come into its own again, for Somerset ended, where many other good and true were cut off, on Tower Hill. Although subsequently restored to the bishop of Salisbury, it was again alienated by Bishop Cotton to Sir Walter Raleigh, as payment for favours and promotion received when that hero and courtier was in the enjoyment of royal smiles. Raleigh, as every one knows, ended tragically, after long-drawn misery, in 1618, on the same spot where Somerset had suffered sixty years earlier. And well, the superstitious may think, was it that by legal quirks and quibbles James I. succeeded in chousing Raleigh's son out of his inheritance, for the ill-omened possession continued to work disaster. James bestowed it upon his favourite, the despicable Robert Carl, Earl of Somerset, who, convicted of being accessory to the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, was condemned to die, but was reprieved, and finally released by the timid James, to die obscurely in 1645. Something of a blundering curse, this, one may think, to miss scoring a "bull" on so admirable and easy a mark.

The king then conveyed the property to Digby,

Earl of Bristol, the "Earl of Severn" of the slight story of *Anna, Lady Baxby*, in *A Group of Noble Dames*. When the Civil War broke out, Sherborne Castle was garrisoned for the king by the Marquis of Hertford, and early besieged by the Earl of Bedford, on behalf of the Parliament. It happened here—as so often it did in their internecine strife—that there were relatives engaged on either side in this siege. The Earl of Bristol's son, George, Lord Digby, was married to the Lady Anne Russell, sister of the Earl of Bedford. She it was, the "Anna, Lady Baxby," of the story, who rode out secretly to her brother, and told him that if he were determined to reduce the castle, he "should find his sister's bones buried in the ruins." But the investment continued until, finding himself weaker than he had supposed, the marquis offered to surrender on terms. If they were not accepted he proposed, with the Lady Anne's consent, and indeed at her wish, to station her on the battlements, and let the enemy's marksmen do their worst. The Earl of Bedford was not proof against this, and it is said, raising the siege, retired.

But this plan would not always work. Three years later, in 1645, when Sir Lewis Dives, the Earl of Bristol's stepson, was in command, a greater than the Earl of Bedford appeared before Sherborne Castle, and summoned it to surrender. This was Sir Thomas Fairfax, flushed with his successes, and making a clean sweep of the garrisons in the west of England. For sixteen days, his forces sat down in front of the castle, which then surrendered, with its garrison of fifty-five gentlemen and six hundred soldiers. With that surrender came the final ruin,

for the castle was "slighted," or destroyed by gunpowder, its contents and the spoils of "the lodge," sold to the people of Sherborne. This "Lodge" was the mansion which even then had been built near by, the castle already proving too inconvenient for the ideas of those times. It is the so-called "Castle" of to-day, still the seat of Digbys, collateral and commoner descendants of the old owners. Sir Walter Raleigh built the centre portion of it in 1594, as his arms and the sculptured figures show, and Digbys the later wings. Their crest, the singular one of an ostrich holding a horse-shoe in its beak, is prominent over the entrance to the courtyard. In the park is still shown a stone seat, said to be that on which Sir Walter Raleigh was resting and smoking his first pipe of tobacco, when his pipe was dowsed and he drenched, by the pail of water thrown over him by his faithful retainer, who, not unnaturally, as tobacco was then a thing unknown, imagined his master to be on fire, and, in the expressive words of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade's reports, "well alight."

The Lodge, now the "Castle," was a halting-place of the Prince of Orange on his triumphal march from Tor Bay, in 1688. He slept here a night, and from a printing-press in the house was issued his address to the people of England.

CHAPTER XVIII

SHERBORNE TO CERNE ABBAS AND WEYMOUTH

It is twenty-six miles from stately Sherborne, the "Sherton Abbas" of *The Woodlanders*, to where Weymouth sits enthroned on the margin of her circular Bay, and, always supposing that no strong southerly gale is blowing, there is for the cyclist no easier route in all the Hardy Country. Bating the steep rise out of Sherborne and out of the Vale of Blackmore to the chalk uplands at Minterne Magna, it is a route of favourable gradients, with one interval of dead level.

The river Yeo is a small stream, but its valley is deep and wide, as he who, leaving Sherborne, climbs the hills which shut in that valley, shall find. But a reward comes with the easy descent to the long, scattered street of rustic cottages at Long Burton, whence the way lies across a dead level to where, six miles distant from this point, rise the bastions of the mid-Dorset heights, seen distinctly from here: Dogbury, with his convex clump of cresting trees, like a blue-black wig, High Stoy, where the ridge runs bare, with Nettlecomb Tout and Bulbarrow in the hazy distance.

It is a straight, and a marshy and low-lying, as well as a flat road to Holnest, where, beside the

road, is Holnest Lodge, belonging to the Erle-Drax family, and one of the seats of that eccentric person, the late J. S. W. Sawbridge Erle-Drax, of Charborough Park, long a member of Parliament for Wareham, and one of the last of the squires. The old time squires were laws to themselves, and like none others. The product of generations of

LONG BURTON.

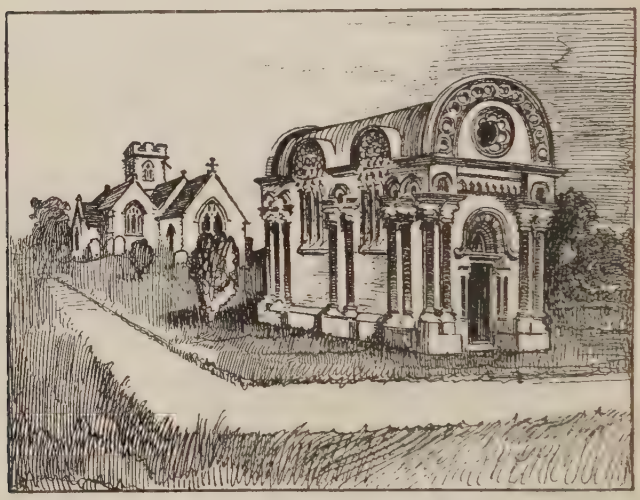
"Whence the way lies to where, six miles distant, rise the bastions of the mid-Dorset heights. . . Dogbury, with his convex clump of cresting trees, like a blue-black wig."

other many-acred squires of great port-drinking propensities and unbounded local influence, whom all the lickings administered at Eton did not suffice to bring to a proper sense of their intrinsic unimportance, apart from the accidental circumstance that they were the lords of their manors, "old Squire Drax," as the rustics call him now that he is dead, might from his high-handed ways have

formed an excellent model for a dramatist building up a melodrama of the old style. He was "the Squire" to the very *n*th degree, with so extraordinary an idea of his own importance that here, on the lawn fronting Holnest Lodge, he caused to be erected in his own lifetime a memorial to himself. An inspection of the approach to that residence will convince any one not only that he was very rich, but very mad as well. The sweeping drive is bordered at intervals with statues : Circes, Floras, Ceres, Dianas, and other classical deities, shining whitely and conspicuously against the grass, and leading the eye up to the central point where, on a tall imposing column, guarded by crouching lions, stands the bronze, frock-coated statue of Squire Drax himself. It is all very like a kind of higher-class Rosherville, and exceedingly curious.

One has not progressed far along the dead-level road before another evidence of the Drax swelled head comes in sight. It is a huge building in the Byzantine style, highly elaborated, and decorated in a costly way with polished stones. Its purpose puzzling at first, it is seen on closer approach to stand in a churchyard and to be a mausoleum. Away back from it stands in perspective the little church of Holnest, scarce larger than this gorgeous place prepared by the squire for his rest, and looking really smaller. The rustics dot the i's and cross the t's of his eccentricity, telling how he had his coffin made in his lifetime and his funeral rehearsed in front of the house. The more superstitious declare that the mausoleum was built so strongly and substantially in order to foil a certain personage whose desire is rather for the souls than for the

bodies of his own ; and, to support their dark beliefs, narrate how, canvassing for votes during the progress of an election the squire declared he had always been a Member of Parliament, would always be, and would rather go to the Pit with the initials of M.P. attached to his name than to Heaven without them. Unfortunately, these wonder-mongers



HOLNEST: THE DRAX MAUSOLEUM.

halt a little short of the completeness desired by dramatic requirements, and do not proceed to tell us how the election was secured by the agency of a gentlemanly stranger of persuasive manners and club-feet, who, upon the declaration of the poll mysteriously disappeared amid a strong smell of Tandstickör matches.

Advancing, we come at Middlemarsh into the

country of *The Woodlanders*, where dense woodlands now begin to cover the levels. The long ridge of the downs ahead now grows stern, steep, and threatening. To the left hand an isolated protuberance, covered with trees, the oddly named Dungeon Hill, rises, disclosing from its flanks peeps into the Vale of Blackmore, where the explorer can, with promptitude and thorough efficacy,

Dungeon Hill and the Vale of Blackmore.

lose himself. Believe one who has been along the sometimes devious and sometimes straight, but always lonely, roads of these levels. There, down beyond Dungeon Hill and Pulham, on a road flat as the alliterative flounder and empty as a City church, stands at King's Stag Bridge across the river Lidden an inn with the sign of the White Hart and a verse alluding to the origin of the name

of "Vale of White Hart" given to this part of the greater Vale of Blackmore—

"When Julius Cæsar Reigned here, I was but then a little Deer.
When Julius Cæsar Reigned King, around my Neck he put this Ring.
Whoever doth me overtake, Oh! spare my life, for Cæsar's sake."

The classic historian of Dorsetshire tells us something of the story thus darkly reflected. According to his account, corrected in details from other sources, it seems that King Henry III. hunting in what was then a forest, rounded up, among several other deer, a particularly beautiful white hart, whose life he spared for future hunting. Somewhat later, Sir John de la Lynde, Bailiff of Blackmore Forest, a neighbouring gentleman of ancient descent and local importance, out hunting with a party, roused the same animal, and, less pitiful than the king, killed it at the end of a long pursuit, at the spot ever after called King's Stag Bridge. The king, highly offended, not only punished Sir John de la Lynde and his companions with imprisonment and heavy fines, but taxed their lands severely and permanently, so that for many later generations the fine of White Hart Silver continued to be paid into the Exchequer. Another historian, the quaint and amusing Fuller, in giving his version, states that the whole county was laid under contribution. "Myself," he says whimsically "hath paid a share for the sauce who never tasted the meat." It is stated that "White Hart Silver" was levied until the reign of Henry VII.

The road, passing a signpost weirdly directing

to "Giant's Head," ascends a steep hill, perhaps the 'Rubdon Hill' of *The Woodlanders*, and the Lyon's Gate Hill of actual fact, down which, into the vale on that autumnal day went Fitzpiers, the infatuated surgeon—a Dorsetshire Tannhäuser, thinking of the Venus who had bewitched him, and careless of the beauty of the season—when "the earth was now at the supreme moment of her bounty. In the poorest spots the hedges were bowed with haws and blackberries ; acorns cracked underfoot, and the burst husks of chestnuts lay exposing their auburn contents as if arranged by anxious sellers for the market." Steeply upward continues the hill, to the ridge of the mid-Dorset heights, whence Blackmore Vale, of which it is very truly said that "an unguided ramble into its recesses in bad weather, is apt to engender dissatisfaction with its narrow, tortuous, and miry ways," is seen spreading out like an unrolled map.

"This fertile and sheltered tract of country, in which the fields are never brown, and the springs never dry," is bounded on the south by the bold chalk ridge that embraces the prominences of Hambledon Hill, Bulbarrow, Nettlecombe-Tout, Dogbury, High Stoy, and Bubb Down." There "in the valley, the world seems to be constructed upon a smaller and more delicate scale ; the fields are mere paddocks, so reduced that from this height their hedgerows appear a network of dark green threads overspreading the paler green of the grass. The atmosphere beneath is languorous, and is so tinged with azure that what artists call the middle distance partakes also of that hue, while the horizon beyond is of the deepest ultramarine. Arable lands

are few and limited ; with but slight exceptions the prospect is a broad rich mass of grass and trees, mantling minor hills and dales within the major. Such is the Vale of Blackmore."

The village of Minterne Magna that, with its fine trees and the seat of Lord Digby, has so handsome a presence, is the "Great Hintock" of *The Woodlanders*. Poor loyal-hearted Giles Winterbourne, "a good man, who did good things," was buried here, beside that ivy-covered church-tower overlooking the road, and now bearing the inscription

"LE TEMPS PASSE
L'AMITIE RESTE
1888
IN MEMORIAM H.R.D."

They laid him to rest "on the top of that hill looking down into the Vale," to whose villages he had, as autumn came round, been wont to descend with his portable cider-mill and press ; and Grace rejoined her husband, and the world went on as usual. Only Marty South remembered him and treasured his memory.

At Minterne Magna, otherwise "Great Hintock," according to a rustic character, "you do see the world and life," whereas, at Little Hintock, to be identified with Melbury Osmund, away down at Evershot, "'tis such a small place that you'd need a candle and lantern to find it, if ye don't know where 'tis."

But, at the same time, outside the pages of novels Minterne Magna is not a place of stir and movement, and is great only in name.

From just before Minterne Magna there is a

left-hand turning which affords an alternative route to Dorchester, avoiding Cerne Abbas, and going exposedly over the haggard downs. The two routes are locally known as the overhill and the underhill roads. The first-named is now little travelled, and its old house of entertainment, the Revels inn, a thing of the past. This, "the forsaken coach-road running in an almost meridional line from Bristol to the south shore of England," is the route of the escaped prisoner and the scene of "Higher Crowstairs" in the intense story of *The Three Strangers*. On that route you see better than anywhere else, those "calcareous downs" described by the novelist, where "the hills are open, the sun blazes down upon fields so large as to give an unenclosed character to the landscape, the lanes are white, the hedges low and splashed, the atmosphere colourless." It is, by the same token, of an exhausting dryness in summer, and in winter only to be undertaken by the most robust.

By the 'underhill' road on the other hand, the ten miles from Minterne to Dorchester are chiefly on a gentle descent. Presently, therefore, one reaches Cerne Abbas, the "Abbot's Cernel" of *Tess* and other stories, situated in a fine widening of the valley through which the river Cerne flows, with the gaunt bare shoulders of the great chalk downs receding far enough to lose something of their asperity, and to gain in distance all the atmosphere and softened outlines of an impressionistic picture. From the south, half a mile beyond the decayed town of Cerne, a very beautiful view of this nature opens out, by the roadside. There the fine tower of the church stands out against the sage-green

coloration of the hills, and with the luxuriant trees and the nestling farms of the valley, presents by force of contrast with the bare uplands a striking picture of comfort, prosperity, and hospitality, not perhaps warranted in every one of those respects by a closer acquaintance. For Cerne is a place very hardly treated by heartless circumstance.

Many centuries ago, in A.D. 987 to be exact, a Benedictine Abbey was founded here by Ethelmar, Earl of Devon and Cornwall, upon the site of a hermitage established by Ædwold, brother of that East Anglican saint, Edmund the King and Martyr. It does not appear what became of the hermit, whether those who established the abbey bought him out, or threw him out; but it certainly seems to demand enquiry, the more especially that hermits and abbots, pious founders and holy monks were not altogether so unbusinesslike in their worldly affairs as the uninstructed might imagine. The hermit probably received due compensation for disturbance and went off somewhere else. However that may be, the abbey grew and flourished. Canute certainly despoiled it, but more than made amends, by large gifts and endowments of other people's property, when he had been brought to see the error of his ways and that plundering—plundering the property of the church, at least—was wrong. And so the business of the abbey progressed through the centuries, to the daily accompaniment of the monks chanting "their wonderful piff-and-paff" as the librettist of *The Golden Legend* makes the devil say of it.

In 1471 Henry VI.'s Queen, Margaret of Anjou, striving desperately, brave heart, on her son's behalf, fled for shelter here, up the road from Weymouth,

where she had landed from France ; but, indeed, little else of history belongs to this sometime rich and splendid abbey in the heart of the hills. It afforded shelter and protection to the townlet of Cerne that had sprung up outside its precincts ; and great therefore was the dismay when ruin overtook it in the time of Henry VIII. The abbey disestablished, the town of course also suffered.

CERNE ABBAS.

"Cerne is dead. There is no deader townlet in England."

How greatly we do not know ; but it plucked up courage again and refused to die, and when England was still that exceedingly uncomfortable England of coaching times, flourished in a modest way on the needs of travellers for succour and shelter on the exhausting journeys that are so romantic to read of in Christmas numbers, but were the terror of those who could not possibly stop at home.

And at last the coaches ceased and railways came to the country in general, but not to Cerne. It is still, to-day, remote from railways and is thus hit several severe, separate, and distinct blows by Fate, which, when travellers no longer needed its shelter, took away its chief reason for existence, refused it the reinvigorating boon of a railway, and then, in the general depression of agriculture, has dealt a final and staggering buffet. Cerne is dead. There is (assuming for the moment positive, comparative, and superlative degrees of deadness) no deader townlet in England, and it has all the interest, and commands all the respect due to the departed. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, and if there were hard things to be said of Cerne, they should not here be uttered. But there are no such things for utterance. It has all the romance of the bygone that appeals to the artist, and I love to dwell upon and in it. It is a place where commercialism has, or should have, no part, and therefore, when I pass a noble-looking farmhouse and a somewhat stately landlady comes out with a key, asking me—with an eye upon the perquisite of the fee exacted—if I would like to see the Abbey Gatehouse, I refuse; earning thereby the keen contempt shown on her expressive face. Soulless Goth, to wander about Cerne and not see the Gatehouse! - Ah! my dear lady, your contempt is misplaced. I love these things better than you imagine, but I hate commercialism—and in such unexpected places—the more.

The abbey ruins, wholly summed up in that Gatehouse, are at the extremity of this dead town, but there is a fine parish church in the centre of its streets. A noble, highly decorated tower is that

THE GATEHOUSE, CERNE ABBEY.

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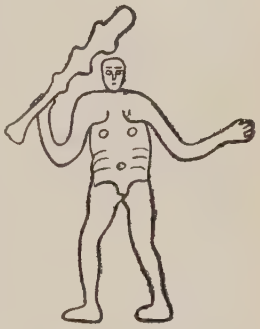
belonging to it, one of the finest productions of the Perpendicular period, with bold gargoyles, whose gaping mouths are for the most part stopped with birds' nests. Decay and ruin squat next door, in the shape of one of Cerne's wrecked and unroofed houses, so long in that condition as to have become a terrace on which wild flowers luxuriantly grow and display themselves to passing admiration. It will be observed that there are shops—or things in the specious and illusory shape of shops—in this town of Yester-year. They indeed were so once, but the shopkeepers have long ceased from their shopkeeping. The windows, perhaps retained over against that time when Cerne shall be resurrected—for Fortune's wheel still spins, and will come full circle some day—are meanwhile excellent for displaying geraniums.



THE CERNE GIANT.

Prominent in most views of Cerne Abbas is that weird figure of a man on the hillside which gives an alternative name to Trendle or Giant's Hill. The "Giant of Cerne" is a big fellow, well deserving his name, for he is 180 feet high. No one *knows* who cut him on the chalk of the hillside, but local tradition has long told how the figure commemorated the destruction of a giant who, feasting on the sheep of Blackmore, laid himself down here, in the sleep of repletion, and was then, like another Gulliver, pinioned where he lay by the enraged

peasantry, who killed him and immediately traced his dimensions for the information of posterity. The prominence of his ribs, however, says little for the result of his feeding.

A more instructed opinion is that the figure represents Heil, a god of the pagan Saxons, and that it was cut before A.D. 600. Fearful legends belong to it: tales of horror narrating how the border enclosing the effigy is the ground plan of a stout wicker-work cage in which the pagan priests imprisoned many victims, whom they offered up as burnt sacrifices to their god.

Looked upon with awe and wonder by the peasantry of old, who cleaned him once every seven years, the Giant is now regarded by them with indifference and left alone, and it is only the stranger who finds himself obsessed with a strange awe as he gazes upon this mystic relic of a prehistoric age. His minatory and uncouth appearance—for the relation of his head to his body is that of a pea to a melon—perhaps even more than his size, impresses the beholder. It should be said that he is merely traced in outline on the turf, in lines two feet broad and one foot deep, and not laid bare, a huge white shape, to the sky. The club he wields is 120 feet long, and from seven to twenty-four feet broad.

CHAPTER XIX

SHERBORNE TO CERNE ABBAS AND WEYMOUTH

(continued)

Past Nether Cerne and Godmanstone, the road leads, consistently straight and on a down gradient, to Charminster, where, in consonance with the place-name, a minster-like church stands. It is rich in monuments of the Trenchards—bearing their motto, *Nosce Teipsum*, Know Thyself—of the neighbouring historic mansion of Wolveton, one of whom—a Sir Thomas—built the tower, in or about the year 1500, as duly attested on the building itself, which displays his cypher of two T's.

Wolveton, standing in the rich level water-meadows where the rivers Cerne and Frome come to a confluence, is, as the Man of Family narrates in the story of *The Lady Penelope*, in *A Group of Noble Dames*, "an ivied manor-house, flanked by battlemented towers, and more than usually distinguished by the size of its mullioned windows. Though still of good capacity, the building is much reduced from its original grand proportions ; it has, moreover, been shorn of the fair estate which once appertained to its lord, with the exception of a few acres of park-land immediately around the mansion.

This was formerly the seat of the ancient and knightly Drenghards, or Drenkhards, now extinct in the male line, whose name, according to the local chronicles, was interpreted to mean *Strenuus Miles*, *vel Potator*, though certain members of the family were averse to the latter signification, and a duel was fought by one of them on that account, as is well known."

The Lady Penelope, who jestingly promised to

CERNE ABBAS.
"Situated in a fine widening of the valley."

marry all three of her lovers in turn, and by that jest earned such misery when Fate ordained that her words should come true, was an actual living character. A daughter of Lord Darcy, she in turn married George Trenchard, Sir John Gage, and Sir William Hervey. As the story truly tells, the Drenghards, or rather Trenchards, are extinct in the male line.

Passing by Poundbury, the "Pummery" of Dorset speech, we enter Dorchester, already described at

considerable length, and, passing down South Street and by the Amphitheatre, of gloomy associations, come out upon the Weymouth—or, as Mr. Hardy would say the "Budmouth"—road.

For the distance of close upon a mile this Roman road, the chief means of communication between their seaport station of Clavinium, near Weymouth, and their inland town of Durnovaria, runs on the level, bordered by the fine full-grown elms of one

WOLVETON HOUSE.

"An ivied manor-house, flanked by battlemented towers."

of Dorchester's many avenues. Then it sets out with a grim straightness to climb to the summit of that geological spine, the Ridgeway, which places so stubborn an obstacle on these nine miles of road that many a faint-hearted pilgrim from Dorchester fails to reach Weymouth, and many another from Weymouth gives up the task at less than half-way.

Climbing here, the vast mass of Maiden Castle rises on the right, conferring a solemnity upon the scene, due not so much to the bulk given it by nature as to the amazing ditches, mounds, scarps, and counterscarps terraced along its mighty bosom by—ay, by whom? Many peoples had a hand in the making of this great fortification. The British Durotriges are said to have styled it "Mai-Dun," the "Castle of the great Hill," and to have established their capital here; and at a later date the Romans camped upon it and must have cursed the Imperialism which brought them here to wilt and wither in face of the bitter blasts of an inclement land.

It was the Dunium of Ptolemy, and has been the wonder of many ages, not easily able to understand by what enormous expenditure of effort all these great mounds were heaped up and what enemies they feared who delved the ditches so deeply and ramped the ridges so steeply and so high.

Maiden Castle is still occupied, although the last defender left it perhaps a thousand years ago; for as the curious traveller to these prehistoric earthworks climbs exhaustedly up the steep rises, over the short grass, he may see the rabbits mounting guard by thousands against the skyline, or fleeing panic-stricken, in admirable open order, showing myriads of white flags formed by their tails as they go loping away over the field.

As one progresses, more and more slowly with the acuter gradient, up the roadway, the church-tower of Winterborne Monkton, among its encircling barns, ricks, and cow-byres, comes into view,

WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND, FROM THE RIDGEWAY.

"Mile-lengths of harbour-walls and breakwaters, punctuated with forts, shrunken by distance to the likeness of a cast seine-net supported by floats."

the observer's eye on a higher level than the roof-top. Village there is none, and the clergyman who on Sundays conducts services here must do so—between the peals of the organ, and in midst of the quieter-spoken passages of morning and evening prayers—to the commentatory lowing of cattle or the grunts of pigs, sounding like the observations of grudging critics. There was once a saint who, like a broody hen that will nurse strange things, preached to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, and the spiritual shepherd of Winterborne Monkton not infrequently has among his congregation a barn owl, and a cheerful concourse of sparrows in the roof, much given to brawling in church.

Roman directness was all very well, but later races found it much too trying for their horses, and thus we find, nearing the summit, that the straight ancient road across the ridgeway has long been abandoned, except by the telegraph-poles, for a cutting through the crest and an S curve down the southern and much steeper side. This expedient certainly eases both ascent and descent, but it does not suffice to render the way less than extremely fatiguing to climb and nerve-shaking to descend.

As a view-point it has remarkable features, for the whole expanse of Portland Roads, the Isle of Portland, and the site on which Weymouth and Melcombe Regis are built are exposed to gaze, very much as though the spectator looking down upon them were bending in an examination of some modelled map of physical geography. White spires at Weymouth and equally white groups of houses at Portland gain striking effects from backgrounds of grey rock or the dark green of trees, massed by

distance to the likeness of dense forests; and the mile-lengths of harbour walls and breakwaters, punctuated with forts, out in the roadstead are shrunken by distance to the likeness of a cast seine-net supported by cork floats. On a ridge inland

THE WISHING WELL, UPWEY.
"A pretty spot, overhung with trees."

a row of circular ricks with peaked roofs showing against the sea looks absurdly like beehives, and down there in the middle distance is the curving line of embankment where the railway from Dorchester goes, after piercing the hill on which we stand by the Bincombe Tunnel.

Descending the hill, we come to the valley of the Wey. The older part of the village of Upwey marks the source of that little stream to the right, and the newer part, with the village of Broadwey, are scarcely to be distinguished from one another, ahead. The original Upwey, the Upwey of the "Wishing Well," lies under the flanks of a great down, where, if you climb and climb and continue climbing, you will presently discover the poppy-like scarlet buildings of the Weymouth waterworks. But there is no need to seek them while the Wishing Well, nearer to hand, calls.

The "Wishing Well" is a pretty spot, overhung with trees and still a place resorted to by tourists, who either shamefacedly, with an implied half-belief in its virtues, drink its waters, or else with the quip and jest of unbelief, defer the slaking of their thirst until the nearest inn is reached, where liquors more palatable to the sophisticated taste—or what Mr. Hardy's rustics would term "a cup of genuine"—are obtainable. Once the haunt of gipsies, who used the well as a convenient pitch, and, when you crossed their palms with silver in the approved style, prophesied fulfilment of the nicest things you could possibly wish yourself—and a good many other things that would never occur to you at all—it is now quite unexploited, save perhaps by a little village girl, who, with a glass tumbler, will save the devotee from stooping on hands and knees and lapping up the magic water, like a dog. The gipsies have been all frightened away by the Vagrants Act, and no great loss to the community in general. The inquisitive stranger, curious to know whether the villagers themselves

resort to their famous Fount of Heart's Desire, receives a rude shock when he is told by one of them that, "Bless 'ee, there baint a varden's wuth o' good in 'en, at arl. Mebbe 'tis good ver a whist (a stye) but arl them 'ere magicky tales be done away wi'." The Age of Faith is dead.

And so into Weymouth, down a road lined with long rows of suburbs. Radipole is come to this complexion at last, and its spa is, like a service rendered and a benefit conferred, a thing clean forgot.

CHAPTER XX

WEYMOUTH

Well, then, here, reaching a modern church with a tall spire, surrounded by suburban villas, is the beginning of Weymouth. The sea in these miles has dropped gradually down, out of sight as the road comes to the level, and at this point you might, to all intents and purposes, be at North Kensington, which the spot greatly resembles. But turning sharply with the road to the right the derogatory illusion is at once dispelled, for the sea is out there, sparkling, to the left ; and, in the perfect segment of a circle, the Esplanade of Weymouth goes sweeping round to the harbour, with the Nothe Point fort above, and, away out in the distance, that towering knob of limestone, the Isle of Portland. It is a stimulating view, and has generally other and even more stimulating constituents than those of nature, for Weymouth and Portland are places of arms, and the ships of the Navy are usually represented by a squadron of cruisers well in shore, with a brace or two of battleships coming, going, or anchored easily in sight, and numbers of those ugly, imp-like craft, torpedo-boats, flying hither and thither.

Weymouth styles itself—or others style it—"the Naples of England," but no one has ever yet found Naples returning the compliment and calling itself "the Weymouth of Italy." There is really no reason why Weymouth, instead of seeking some fanciful resemblance based solely, it may be supposed on the configuration of its widely curving bay, should not stand or fall by the sufficing attractions of its own charming self. For one thing, it would be impossible to persuade the public that Weymouth owns a Vesuvius somewhere away in its *hinterland*, and, although the country is rich in Roman camps, no antiquary has yet discovered a Pompeii midway between Melcombe Regis and Dorchester.

The town is still in essentials the Weymouth of George III., the "Budmouth" of Thomas Hardy. They are, it is true, the battleships of Edward VII. wallowing out there, like fat pigs, where of yore the wooden men-o'-war swam the waters like swans ; but the houses at least, that face the Esplanade in one almost unbroken row, each one like its neighbour and all absolutely innocent either of taste or pretension, are characteristically Georgian. Taken individually and examined, one might go greater lengths, and say such a house was more than insipid and commonplace—was, indeed, downright ugly—but in a long curving row the effect is a comprehensive one of dignified restraint. At any rate, they are constructed of good honest dull red brick, and not plastered and made to look like stone. This bluff honesty in these days of shams and of restless, worried-looking designs, when every new building must have its own ready-made picturesqueness, and this total absence of

anything and everything that by remotest chance could be thought an ornament, is grateful.

We speak of this as "Weymouth," but it is rather, to speak by the card, Melcombe Regis, and although the interests of both this and of Weymouth proper, on the other side of the narrow neck of harbour, are now pooled, it was once a sign of ignorance and a certain offence not to carefully distinguish between the two. Their rivalries and jealousies were of old so bitter that the river-mouth and harbour, long since bridged to make a continuous street, was like a stream set between two alien states. The passage was then "by a bote and a rope bent over ye haven, so y^{t} in ye fery bote they use no ores."

These disputes and contentions had risen almost to the condition of a smouldering petty local warfare in the time of Queen Elizabeth, when means were taken to put an end to it. Thus in 1571 they were compelled to unite, and in the familiar phrase of fairy tales have "lived happily ever after." Says Camden: "These stood both some time proudlie upon their owne severall priviledges, and were in emulation one of the other, but now, tho' (God turne it to the good of both!) many, they are, by authoritie of Parliament, incorporated into one bodie, conjoyned by late by a bridge, and growne very much greater and goodlier in buildings and by sea adventures than heretofore."

But things widely different from trade have in later times made the fortune of the conjoined towns of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. I suppose the one or the other of them was bound in the course of time to be "discovered" as a bathing-resort,

but it is to George III. that Weymouth owes a deep debt of gratitude. His son had already "discovered" Brighthelmstone, or rather, had placed the seal of his approval upon Dr. Russel's earlier discovery of it; and likewise Weymouth was already on the road to recognition when George III. came here first, in 1789. Thirty years or so earlier, when people had begun as a strange new experience, to bathe, the sands of Weymouth—or to adopt an attitude of strict correctitude, the sands of Melcombe Regis—were on the way to appreciation. Then greater folks lending their august patronage where that of meaner people had little weight, the place was resorted to by the famous Ralph Allen of Bath, for whom in 1763 the first bathing-machine was constructed, and by a stream of visitors gradually ascending in the social scale. The place long found favour with the Duke of Gloucester, by whose recommendation the king was induced to make a visit and then a lengthy stay, placing the apex at last upon this imposing pyramid of good fortune. It was no fleeting glimpse of royal favour thus accorded, for with the coming of summer the king for many years resided here at Gloucester Lodge, the mansion facing the sea built by his brother the Duke of Gloucester, and now the staid and grave Gloucester Hotel. Weymouth basked happily in the splendours of that time. They were splendours of the respectable domestic sort generally associated with that homely monarch, who bathed from his machine in full view of his loyal lieges and then went home to boiled mutton and turnips. He made sober holiday on the Dorset coast while his graceless son was on the coast of Sussex rearing a

fantastical palace and playing pranks fully matching it in extravagance of design and purse.

Weymouth's return for all these favours is still to be seen, in the bronze group erected by the townsfolk in 1809, to celebrate the generally joyful occasion of his Jubilee, to perpetuate the especial gratitude of the people for favours received, and in hopes of more to come.

Weymouth very closely reflects the prosperity of that great era, in the Georgian streets, the quaintly bowed windows of private houses and the now old-world shop-fronts, many of them exquisite examples of the restrained taste and aptitude for just proportion in design characteristic of that age, and only now beginning to be appreciated at their true worth. It was the age of the Adams brothers, of Chippendale and Sheraton ; an age rightly come to be regarded in our time as classic in all things in the domain of architecture and decoration. In its unaltered purlieus Weymouth is thus singularly like the older parts of Brighton, but now richer in vestiges of the Georgian period than the larger and more changeful town.

That, doubtless, was a period of inflated prices in Weymouth. King, queen, and princesses, fashionables and many soldiers sent up the ideas of tradesfolk just as the sun expands the mercury of a thermometer. Uncle Benjy, in *The Trumpet Major*, found Budmouth a place where money flew away doubly as quick as it did when the famous Scot visited London and "hadna' been there a day when bang went saxpence." At Budmouth in the time of Farmer George, it was a " shilling for this and a shilling for that ; if you only eat one egg or even a poor windfall of an apple, you've got to pay ; and

WEYMOUTH HARBOUR.

"Within sight, and the easiest reach, of those two great features of a Christian and a civilised land: the Church and the Public House."

a bunch o' radishes is a halfpenny, and a quart o' cider a good tuppence three-farthings at lowest reckoning. Nothing without paying!" Ay! but if prices were no higher than these, 'twas no such ruinous place, after all. Poor Uncle Benjy!

The most striking differences in physical geography between the constituent parts of Weymouth are that Melcombe Regis, here on the shore is flat as a pancake, and Weymouth, there on 't'other side of the harbour, is as hilly as a house-roof. You could have no greater dissimilarity than that between the prudish formality which stands for the Melcombe front and the heaped-up terraces of houses of every description at Weymouth, which has no front at all; unless indeed the lowest tier of houses skirting the harbour and its quays, and looking into the back alleys and quays of Melcombe may so be styled. In those old days, to which Weymouth dates back, no seaside town could afford so assailable a luxury as a "front," and the older quarters of nearly all such are generally found, as here, folded away under the lee of a bluff, or thinly lining the shores of an estuarial harbour. Here the Nothe Point, with its fort mounted with heavy guns, is the rocky bluff behind which the old town cowered from elemental and human foes, and that estuary, both by reason of its narrow entrance, and those great forts of the Nothe and Portland, has never been one sought by an enemy's ship.

The harbour is not uninteresting: what harbour ever is? The comings and goings of ships have their own romance, and bring rumours of all kinds of outer worlds and strange peoples. You look across from the quays of Weymouth to the quays

of Melcombe, and there, beside the walls and the old warehouses, lie the ships from many home and foreign ports, their names duly to be read under their counters. Whence they individually come, I do not greatly care to know. This one may only have come from the Channel Islands with a consignment of early potatoes : and, on the other hand, it may have won home again after who knows what romantic doings at the Equator or within the Arctic Zone. It may have brought treasure-trove, or on the other hand be merely carrying ordinary commercial freights, at so low a figure that the owners are dissatisfied and the skipper gloomy. It is well, you see, to leave a little margin for fancy when the good ship has come to port once more and within sight and the easiest reach of those two great features of a Christian and a civilised land : the Church and the Public House.

In these days the town is recovering at last from the undeserved neglect into which it fell after the illness and death of George III. and from later disasters and indifferences ; and, what with improved railway travelling, and the added interest it obtains from being selected as the site of a new great national harbour where more than ever the ships of the Navy will come and go, has a great future before it.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ISLE OF PORTLAND

To the generality of untravelled folk, Portland is nothing but a quarry and a prison. It is both and more. It is, for one additional thing, a fortress, in these times grown to a considerable strength, and, for another, is a singular outlying corner of England tethered to the mainland only by that seemingly precarious stretch of pebbles, the Chesil Beach. As Weymouth is peculiarly the scene of *The Trumpet Major*, so Portland, the "Isle of Slingers," as Mr. Hardy calls it, is especially, though not with absolute exclusiveness, the district of *The Well Beloved.*

There is a choice of ways to Portland. You may go by the high road—and a very steep up and down road it is, too—past Wyke, or may proceed by the crumbling clifflets past Sandsfoot Castle, one of those blockhouse coastward fortresses stretching from Deal and Sandown Castles, in Kent, along the whole of the south coast, to this point, whose building we owe to the panic that possessed the nation in the time of Henry VIII.: one of those periodic fears of a French invasion that from time to time have troubled the powers that be. Two of the long series were placed in this neighbourhood;

the so-styled "Portland Castle" at the base of the Isle of Portland itself, and this craggy ruin of Sandsfoot, roofless and rough and more cliff-like than the cliffs themselves, at the mainland extremity of this sheltered inlet, wherein, in days of yore, an enemy might conceivably have effected a lodgment. For the defence of this fort, when new-builded

SANDSFOOT CASTLE.

"This craggy ruin of Sandsfoot, roofless and rough, and more cliff-like than the cliffs themselves."

in the Eighth Harry's time, there were to be provided "the nombre of xv hable footmen, well furneyshed for the warres, as appertayneth," together with some "harchers" duly furnished, or "harmed" as the summons might have put it, with their "bows and harrowes." Alas! poor overworked letter H!

It is here, in the story of *The Well Beloved*, that Jocelyn Pierston, the weirdly constituted hero of that fantastic romance, elects to bid farewell to Avice Caro, and past it Anne Garland went on her way to Portland Bill, "along the coast road to Portland." When she had reached the waters of the Fleet, crossed now by a bridge, she had to ferry over, and from thence to walk that causeway road whose mile-and-three-quarters of flatness, bounded sideways by the expressionless blue of the summer sky and the equally vacant vastnesses of the yellow pebbles of the Chesil Beach, seems to foot-passengers an image of eternity. It is but a flat road, less than two miles long, but the Isle ahead seems to keep as far off as ever, and the way is so bald of incident that a sea-poppy growing amid the pebbles is a change for the eye, a piece of driftwood a landmark, and a chance boat or capstan a monument.

But even the Chesil Beach has an end, and at last one reaches Portland and Fortune's Well, referred to in that story of the Portlanders as "the Street of Wells." The well—a wishing well of the good, or the bad, old sort, where you wished for your heart's desire, and perhaps obtained the boon in the course of a lifetime—by striving and labouring for it—is behind that substantial inn, the Portland Arms, and it is a cynical commentary upon this and all such legends of faëry that, while the Portlanders in general, and the people of Fortune's Well in particular, can one and all direct you to the inn, if so be you are bat-like enough not to perceive it for yourself, very few of them know anything at all of the magic spring, of where it is, or that the

place took its name from the existence of such a thing.

One circumstance, above all other curious and interesting circumstances of this so-called "Isle" of Portland, is calculated to impress the stranger with astonishment. Its giant forts ; its great convict establishment, "the retreat, at their country's expense, of geniuses from a distance," the odd *nexus* of almost interminable pebble beach that tethers it to the mainland and makes the name of "Isle" a misnomer, are all fitting things for amazement ; but no one previously uninformed on the point is at all likely to have any conception of its numerous villages and hamlets and the large populations inhabiting this grim, forbidding, "solid and single block of limestone four miles long." Eleven thousand souls live and move and have their being on what the uninstructed, gazing across the Roads from Weymouth, might be excused for thinking a penitential rock, reserved for forts and garrison artillery, and for convicts and those whose business it is to keep them in order. The number of small villages or hamlets is itself in the nature of a surprise. Entering upon this happily styled "Gibraltar of Wessex," there is in the foreground, by the railway-station, Chesilton ; succeeded by Fortune's Well, Castleton to the left, Portland to the right, and, away ahead up to the summit of a stupendous climb on to the great elevated, treeless and parched stony plateau of the Isle, Reforne. Beyond the prison and the prison quarries, come Easton, Wakeham, Weston, and Southwell ; all stony and hard-featured and like nothing else but each other. To-day an exploration of the Isle is easy, for a railway runs

from Weymouth along the beach to Chesilton, and another, skirting the cliffs, takes you out almost to the famous Bill itself; but otherwise, all the circumstances of the place still fully show how the Portlanders came to be that oddly different race from the mainlanders they are shown to be in the pages of *The Well Beloved*, and in the writings of innumerable authors.

Portland was to the ancients the Isle of Vindilis, the "Vindelia" of Richard of Cirencester; and Roman roads are surviving on it to this day, notwithstanding the blasting and quarrying activities of this vast bed of building-stone, whence much of the material for Sir Christopher Wren's City of London churches came, and despite the business of fortification that has abolished many merely antiquarian interests. You, indeed, cannot get away from stone, here on Portland; physically, in historic allusions, and in matters of present-day business. The story of the Isle begins with it, with those ancient inhabitants, the *Baleares*, slingers of stones, who made excellent defence of their unfertile home with the inexhaustible natural ammunition; and quarrying is now, after the passing of many centuries, its one industry. It is to be supposed, without any extravagance of assumption, that the Portlanders of to-day are the descendants of those ancient Baleares, and, certainly until quite recent times, they maintained the aloofness and marked individuality to be expected from such an ancestry. To them the mainlanders were foreigners, or, as themselves would say, "kimberlins"; a flighty, mercurial and none too scrupulous people, calling themselves Englishmen, who lived on the adjacent island of Great Britain and

were only to be dealt with cautiously, and then solely on matters of business connected with the selling of stone, or maybe of fish, caught in Deadman's Bay. For the true Portlanders, like their home, are grey and unsmiling, and reflect their surroundings, even as do those inhabitants of more sheltered and fertile places; and still, although things be in these later days of railway communication and a kind of quick-change and "general-post" all over the country somewhat altered, a stranger, who by force of circumstances—pleasure is out of the question—comes to live here, will find himself as uncongenial as oil is to water.

The outlook of the old Portlanders upon strangers was justified to them, in a way, when the great prison was built and the gangs of convicts began to be a feature of the Isle. *They*, who thus by force of circumstances over which they had no control, took up a hard-working and frugal existence upon the Isle, were specimens of the "kimberlins"; and the prejudices, if not quite the ignorance, of the islanders saw in them representative specimens of all "Outlanders."

When you come toilsomely uphill from Fortune's Well, out upon the stony plateau that is Portland, you presently become conscious of the contiguity of that great convict establishment, in the appearance of notice-boards, warning all and sundry of the penalties awaiting those who aid prisoners to escape. Such an offence, you learn, "shall be treated as a felony, not subject to any bail or mainprize" (whatever that may be). But any "free person" finding money, letters, or clothing, or anything that may be supposed to have been left to facilitate

the escape of prisoners shall be rewarded, unless such person shall be proved to have entered into collusion, etc., etc., and so forth.

What, however, one especially desires to call attention to is the delicious expression, "free person." Obviously, to the official minds ruling Portland "free persons" owe their freedom, not to any virtues they possess, but to their luck in not being found out. One, being a "free person," has, therefore, after reading this notice, an uneasy suspicion that freedom is, in the eye of those authorities, a wholly undeserved accident, and that if every one —saving, of course, officials—had their deserts, they would be cutting and hauling stone out yonder, with the gangs in those yellow jackets and knickerbockers plentifully decorated with a pleasing design in broad arrows.

Being merely a "free person," without prejudice in one's favour in the eyes of the armed warders who abound here, it behoves one to walk circumspectly on Portland.

A great deal might be said of the Convict Prison and its quarries. It is another "sermon in stones," quite as effective as the sermons preached by those other stones referred to in the lines

> . . . books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything,

and the text, I take it, is the amended and horribly sophisticated one : "Thou shalt not steal—or, if you must, do it outside the cognisance of the criminal laws!"

But this only in passing. Literary landmarks have fortunately, no points of contact with burglars,

fraudulent trustees, and swindling promoters of companies. We will make for Pennsylvania Castle, very slightly disguised in *The Well Beloved* as "Sylvania Castle," the residence of Jocelyn Pierston in that story. Coming to it, past the cottage of Avice, down that street innocent of vegetation, the thickets of trees surrounding the Castle (which is

BOW AND ARROW CASTLE.

not a castle, but only a castellated mansion built in 1800 by Wyatt, in true Wyattesque fashion, for the then Governor of the Isle) are seen, closing in the view. A tree is something more than a tree on stony, wind-swept Portland. Any tree here is a landmark, and a grove of trees a feature; and thus, in the thickets and cliffside undergrowths of "Sylvania Castle," that justify the name and

give the lie to any who may in more than general terms declare Portland to be treeless, the boskage is therefore more than usually gracious.

Many incidents in the elfish career of Pierston are made to happen here. The first Avice was courted by him in the churchyard down below, where a landslip has swept away the little church that gave to Church Hope Cove its name, and Avice the third eloped with another—that Another who with that capital A lurks between the pages of every novel, and behind the scenes in most plays —down the steep lane that runs beneath the archways of "Rufus'," or Bow and Arrow, Castle on to the rocks beside the raging sea.

By lengthy cliff-top ways we leave this spot and make for Portland Bill, whence Anne Garland tearfully watched the topsails and then the top-gallants, and at last the admiral's flag of the *Victory* drop down towards, and into, the watery distance. Offshore is the Shambles lightship that gave a refuge to the fleeing Avice and Leverre.

This "wild, herbless, weatherworn promontory," called Portland Bill, with its two lighthouses looking down upon shoals and rapid currents of extraordinary danger to mariners, obtains its name from the beak-like end of the Isle which "stretches out like the head of a bird into the English Channel." Other, and more fanciful and wonder-loving accounts would have us believe that it derives from this being the site of propitiatory Baal fires in far-off pagan times; and, if we like to carry on the fancy, we may draw comparisons between the fires of the shivering superstitious terrors of those old heathens, and the beneficent warning gleams maintained here

in modern times by the Trinity House, for the benefit of "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters."

Completing the circuit of Portland, the return to Fortune's Well and Chesilton is made chiefly along high ground disclosing a comprehensive and beautiful view of the whole westward sweep of the Dorset coast, where the many miles of the Chesil Beach at last lose themselves in hazy distance, and the heights of Stonebarrow and Golden Cap, between Bridport and Lyme Regis, pierce the skies.

CHAPTER XXII

WEYMOUTH TO BRIDPORT AND BEAMINSTER

To leave Weymouth by this route is to obtain some initial impressions of a very striking character: impressions, not slight or fleeting, of hilliness and of Weymouth's modern growth. A specious and illusory flat quayside stretch of road, by the well-known swan-haunted Backwater, ends all too soon, and the road goes at a grievous inclination up through what was once the village, now the suburb, and a very packed and populous suburb, too, of East Chickerell. To this succeeds the Chickerell of the West; and so, in and out and round about, and up and down—but chiefly up—at last to Portisham, the first place of any Hardyean interest.

Portisham, under the bold hills that rise to the commanding height of Blackdown—locally "Black'on," just as the name of the village is shortened to "Po'sham"—rising eight hundred and seventeen feet above the sea, is notable to us both from fiction and in facts. It appears in *The Trumpet Major* as the village to which Bob Loveday comes to seek service under Admiral Hardy, and although the brave but sentimentally flighty Bob be a character of fiction, the admiral is that very real historical per-

sonage, Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, Nelson's friend and comrade-in-arms, who was born here, in the house still pointed out, in 1769,

PORTISHAM.

"A long avenue of poplars and ashes, with the village church and some farmsteads in the vale, and the tremendous sides of the rolling downs filling in the background."

and to whose memory the conspicuous monument on Blackdown is erected. The house is the first on the left, at the cross-roads as you make for

the village. In the garden belonging to it, on the opposite side of the road may still be seen a sundial, bearing the inscription:

JOSEPH HARDY, ESQ.,
Kingston Russell. Lat. 50° 45′
1767
Fugio fuge.

It is a lovely perspective along the road approaching Portisham, disclosing a long avenue of poplars and ashes, with the village church and some scattered farmsteads in the vale, and the tremendous sides of the rolling down, covered in patches with furze, filling in the background. The beautiful old church has, happily, been left very much to itself, with the lichen-stains of age and other marks of time not yet scraped off. A strange epitaph in the churchyard provokes curiosity:

"William Weare lies here in dust,
As thou and I and all men must.
Once plundered by Sabean force,
Some cald it war but others worse.
With confidence he pleads his cavse,
And Kings to be above those laws.
September's eygth day died hee
When neare the date of 63
Anno domini 1670."

Those Sabines appear from the internal evidence of the epitaph to have been the Roundhead party, and "rebellion," or perhaps "robbery," to have been the worse thing than war some called it. The allusion is probably to some raid in which cows and sheep were carried off by the Puritans and were grudged them by the loyal Weare, who seems,

THE ROAD OUT OF ABBOTSBURY.

in the passage where he claims "Kings to be above those laws," to have cheerfully borne some other foray on the Royalists' behalf.

Two miles from Portisham is the large village of Abbotsbury, not itself the scene of any of the Wessex romances, but intrinsically a very interesting place, remarkable for a hilltop chapel of St. Catherine anciently serving as a seamark, and for the remains of the Abbey; few, and chiefly worked into farmsteads and cottages, but including a great stone barn of the fifteenth century, as long as a cathedral, and very cathedral-like in its plan.

The great barn of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, scene of the sheep-shearing, is really a description of the monastic barn of Abbotsbury, which, as in the story, resembles a church with transepts. "It not only emulated the form of the neighbouring church of the parish, but vied with it in antiquity. . . . The vast porches at the sides, lofty enough to admit a waggon laden to its highest with corn in the sheaf, were spanned by heavy pointed arches of stone, broadly and boldly cut, whose very simplicity was the origin of a grandeur not apparent in erections where more ornament has been attempted. The dusky, filmed chestnut roof, braced and tied in by huge collars, curves, and diagonals was far nobler in design, because more wealthy in material, than nine-tenths of those in our modern churches. Along each side wall was a range of striding buttresses, throwing deep shadows on the spaces between them, which were perforated by lancet openings, combining in their proportions the precise requirements, both of beauty and ventilation. One could say about this barn, what

SHEEP-SHEARING IN WESSEX.

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could hardly be said of either the church or the castle akin to it in age and style, that the purpose which had dictated its original erection was the same with that to which it was still applied."

Out of Abbotsbury, and down amid the waters of the West Fleet, is the famous Swannery, where, amid reedy lakes and marshes, some thousands of swans have from ancient times had a home. Once belonging to the Church, in the persons of the old abbots of the Benedictine abbey of Abbotsbury, the swans are now the property of the Earl of Ilchester, descendant of the "First Countess of Wessex," Betty Dornell, whose romance is set forth in *A Group of Noble Dames*. Though long passed from the hands of any religious establishment, the ownership of the swans still points with the trifling alteration in the position of an apostrophe, to the fact that "the earth is the Lords' and the fulness thereof."

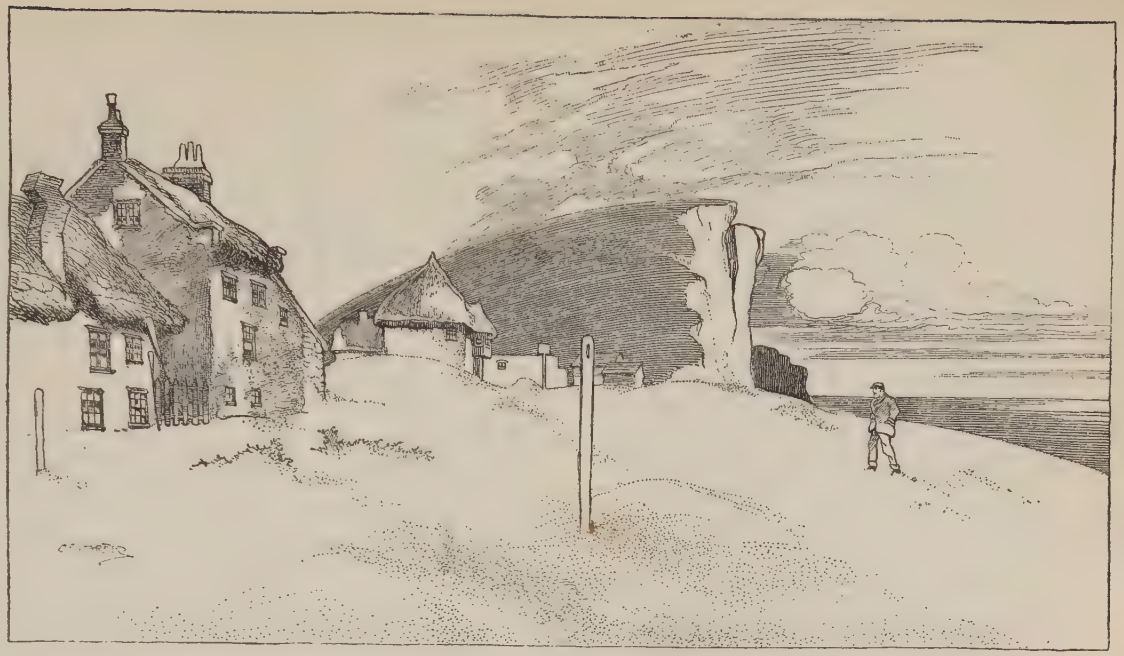
Eight miles of cliff-top roads, with magnificent views to the left over sea and coast, and other views equally magnificent inland, to the right, lead in staggering drops and rises past Swyre and Puncknowle down to Burton Bradstock, and thence to the "unheard-of harbour" of West Bay.

West Bay, and Bridport town itself, are scenes in *Fellow Townsmen*, where they are called "Port Bredy," from the little river, the Brit or Bredy, which here flows into the sea. West Bay is one of the oddest places on an odd and original coast. A mile and a half away from Bridport town, which is content to hide, sheltering away from the sea-breezes, it has always been about to become great, either as a commercial harbour or a seaside resort,

or both, but has ended in not achieving greatness of any kind. No one who enjoys the sight of a quiet and picturesque place will sorrow at that.

Picturesque it is in a wholly accidental and unstudied way. It owns a little harbour, with quays and an inn or two, and shipping that, daring greatly, has to be warped in between the narrow timbered pier-heads, where a furious sea is for ever banging in from the unsheltered bay; and away at one side it is shut in from the outside coast by some saucy-looking cliffs of golden yellow sandstone, whose odd effect is due to their being the remaining part of a symmetrically rounded down. The seaward part has been shorn off, with the odd result that the rest looks like the quarter of some gigantic Dutch cheese of pantomine. It is an eloquent, stimulating, not unpleasing loneliness that characterises the shore of West Bay. A few old thatched houses, halting midway between an inland and a coastwise picturesqueness, and so only succeeding in being broken-heartedly nondescript, start out of wastes of tiny shingle, and are backed at a discreet distance by a long row of modern houses, whose architect is so often on their account professionally spoken of as a genius, that it becomes a duty to state, however convenient to the residents in them their plan may be, that their appearance in the view is the one pictorial drawback to West Bay.

The microscopic shingle—for shingle it is—of West Bay has for centuries been the enemy of the place and has practically strangled it. There are heaped up wastes of it everywhere, and every visitor involuntarily carries some of it away, as a sample,



WEST BAY, BRIDPORT.

" A few old thatched houses, halting midway between an inland and a coastwise picturesqueness, start out of the wastes of tiny shingle."

about his person, in his shoes or his hair, or in his pockets. The more of it removed in this, or indeed in any other manner, the better pleased will West Bay be, for it comes, unasked, into the houses; you have it for breakfast, lunch, tea, and supper, as an unsolicited garnish to the viands, and when at last you seek repose between the sheets, there it is again. These wastes are part of that natural phenomenon of the Dorset coast, the Chesil Beach, which runs eighteen miles from this point along the perfectly unbroken shores of the Bay to Chesilton and Portland. The "Chesil" is just the "Pebble" beach: that old word for pebbles being found elsewhere in Dorsetshire, and at Chislehurst, among other places. A pecularity of it is that by insensible degrees it grows coarser as it proceeds in a south-easterly direction, ending as very large pebbles at Portland. The fishermen of this lonely coast, landing on dark nights, with nothing else to guide them as to their whereabouts, can always readily settle the point by handling this shingle, and by use can tell within a mile of the particular spot.

The story of West Bay's struggle against this insidious enemy is an old one. In 1722 the Bridport authorities procured an Act of Parliament empowering them to restore and rebuild the haven and port, the piers and landing-places, in order to bring the town to that ancient and flourishing state whence it had declined. The preamble stated that by reason of a great sickness and other accidents, the wealthy inhabitants had been swept away and the haven choked. But although the Legislature had given authority for the work to be done, it did not indicate

whence the funds were to be obtained, and so it was not until 1742 that the pier, authorised twenty years before, was built, nor was it until another fourteen years had waned that the pier and harbour were enlarged. Mr. Hardy in *Fellow Townsmen* thus describes West Bay : " A gap appeared in the rampart of hills which shut out the sea, and on the left of the opening rose a vertical cliff, coloured a burning orange by the sunlight, the companion cliff on the right side being livid in shade. Between these cliffs, like the Libyan Bay which sheltered the shipwrecked Trojans, was a little haven, seemingly a beginning made by Nature herself of a perfect harbour, which appealed to the passer-by as only requiring a little human industry to finish it and make it famous, the ground on each side, as far back as the daisied slopes that bounded the interior valley, being a mere layer of blown sand. But the Port-Bredy burgesses a mile inland had, in the course of ten centuries, responded many times to that mute appeal, with the result that the tides had invariably choked up their works with sand and shingle as soon as completed. There were but few houses here : a rough pier, a few boats, some stores, an inn, a residence or two, a ketch unloading in the harbour, were the chief features of the settlement."

The harbour road, along whose mile and a half, the domestically unhappy Barnet went to see his Lucy at various intervals of time, leads into the corporate town of Bridport, which, after long remaining, as far as the casual eye of the stranger may perceive, little affected by the circumstance of being on a railway, is now developing a something in the nature of a suburb, greatly to the dismay of

neighbouring residents who, residing here because of its isolation on a branch railway that brings few passengers, and to landward of a harbour that has no commerce, now can glimpse at the end of a vista of years some prospect of the ancient peace of Bridport being genteelly disturbed.

Bridport was, in those days when it remained a busy place, a town keenly interested in the flax, hemp, twine, and rope industries ; and rope and twine walks, where the old methods are even yet in use, are still features of its less prominent lanes and alleys, but the unobservant and the incurious, who to be sure form the majority of travellers, might pass, and do pass, through Bridport, without thinking it any other than a quiet market town, dependent solely upon surrounding agricultural needs and weekly village shopping.

When hemp was grown in the neighbourhood of Bridport, in those bustling days when the manufacturers of the town supplied the King's Navy with ropes, and criminals were suspended by this staple article of the town, the expression "stabbed with a Bridport dagger," was a pretty, or at least a symbolical, way of saying that a man had been hanged. It was a figure of speech that quite escaped that matter-of-fact antiquary, Leland, when in the time of Henry VIII. he came to Bridport and stolidly noted down : "At Bridport be made good daggers."

One is disposed to sympathise with Leland in that egregious error of his, for which he and his memory have been laughed at for more than three hundred and fifty years. How his shade must writhe at the shame of it ! He was, doubtless, tired

and bored, for some reason or another, when he reached Bridport, and to his undoing, took things on trust. And nowadays, every one who writes the very leastest scrap on Bridport has his fling at the poor old fellow; and I—conscience tells me—insincerely do the same, under a miserably inadequate cloak of pretended sympathy!

Barnet, whose baulked love is the theme of *Fellow*

HIGH STREET AND TOWN HALL, BRIDPORT.

Townsmen, was descended from the hemp and rope-merchants of Bridport, as the story, in several allusions, tells us.

South Street, leading from the Harbour Road into the right and left course of the main street, contains most of the very few buildings of any great age. Among them is the little Gothic, gabled building now a workmen's club, but once the "Castle" inn. Here, too, is the church, ancient enough, but restored

in 1860, when the two bays were added to the nave ; probably the incident referred to by Mr. Hardy : "The church had had such a tremendous practical joke played upon it by some facetious restorer or other as to be scarce recognisable by its dearest old friends."

There is, in this otherwise rather bald interior of Bridport church, a curious mural tablet to the "Memory of Edward Coker, Gent. Second son of Capt. Robert Coker of Mapowder, Slayne at the Bull Inn, in Bridpur^{t}. June the 14th Añ. Dõ. 1685, by one Venner, who was a Officer unde^{r} the late Dvke of Mvnmovt^{h} in that Rebellion."

The Bull inn stands yet in the main street, but modernised. It is the original of the "Black Bull" in *Fellow Townsmen*.

Six miles due north of Bridport lies the little town of Beaminster, the "hill-surrounded little town" of which Angel Clare's father was vicar. "Sweet Be'mi'ster" says Barnes :

> "Sweet Be'mi'ster, that bist abound
> By green and woody hills all round,"

and in truth those hills that surround it are set about this quiet agricultural town in a manner that fairly astounds the traveller. No railway reaches "Emminster," as it is named in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and, looking upon those mighty natural turrets and domes that beset it, the traveller is of opinion that no railway ever will. Nearing Beaminster at cockshut time, when the birds have all gone to bed, when the sky is hot in the west with the burnished copper of the after-glow, and a

cold blue and green, with pale stars appearing, fills the eastern firmament, the scenery is something awesome and approaching an Alpine sublimity. Then the twilight streets of this quiet place in the basin-like hollow begin to take an hospitable look, and the tall red stone tower of the church, that looks so nobly aloof in day, assumes a welcoming paternal benignancy. It is a toilsome winning to Beaminster, but, when won, worth the trouble of it.

CHAPTER XXIII

WEYMOUTH TO LULWORTH COVE

You cannot go far from Weymouth without a good deal of hill-climbing, but the longest stretch of level in this district, where levels are the exception and hills the rule, is by this route. It is not so very long, even then, for when you have passed the curving Esplanade and Lodmoor Marsh, and come to the foot of Jordan Hill, thought to have been the site of the Roman "Clavinium," it is only two and a half miles. Preston stands on the top of a further hill, and is a place of great resort for brake-parties not greatly interested in literature. Turning to the left out of its street, opposite the Ship inn, we come to the pretty village—or hamlet, for no church is visible—of Sutton Poyntz, the "Overcombe" of *The Trumpet Major*. Its thatched stone cottages, charming tree-shaded stream and mill-pond, and old barns, all under the looming shadow of the downs, vividly recall the old-fashioned ways and talk, and the pleasant romance of Mr. Hardy's only semi-historical novel; and you need not see, if you do not wish, the flagrant Vandalism of the Weymouth water-works, hard by, and can if you will, turn your back upon the inn that will be interesting and

picturesque some day, but now, rawly new, is an outrage upon, and a thing altogether out of key with, these old rustic surroundings.

Squawking ducks, hurrying across the dusty road and flouncing noisily into the clearly running stream, rooks cawing contentedly from their windy see-saw in the topmost branches of tall trees; and tired horses

SUTTON POYNTZ: THE "OVERCOMBE" OF "THE TRUMPET MAJOR."

coming stolidly home from plough are the chief features of this "Overcombe," where John Loveday had his mill, and his sons John and Bob, and Anne Garland and Matilda, and all the lovable, the hateful, or the merely contemptible characters in that sympathetic tale came and went. The mill—I am afraid it is not *the* mill, but one of somewhat later date—still grinds corn, and you can see it, bulking

very largely between the trees, "the smooth mill-pond, over-full, and intruding into the hedge and into the road," as mill-ponds will do, even in these later days of strict local government. But the days of European wars are gone. It is a hundred years since the last call of brave, tender, loyal John Loveday, the Trumpet Major, was silenced on a bloody battlefield in Spain, and well on toward the same tale of years since the press gangs, fellows to that which searched Overcombe Mill for Bob Loveday, impressed likely fellows for service on His Majesty's ships:—the characters of *The Trumpet Major* belong wholly to a bygone age.

To the same age belonged the characters in *The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion*, a short story associated with Bincombe, a tiny village it requires no little exertion to reach; but you may win this way to it as easily—or at any rate, not more laboriously—than by any other route. It stands up among the downs, and in what Dorset folk would call an "outspan"—that is to say a remote hollow, recess or shelf amid them, where their sides are so steep that they give the appearance of some theatrical "back-cloth" to a romantic scene.

"Here stretch the downs, high and breezy and green, absolutely unchanged since those eventful days. A plough has never disturbed the turf, and the sod that was uppermost then is uppermost now. Here stood the camp; here are distinct traces of the banks thrown up for the horses of the cavalry, and spots where the midden heaps lay are still to be observed. At night, when I walk across the lonely place, it is impossible to avoid

hearing, amid the scourings of the wind over the grass-bents and thistles, the old trumpet and bugle-calls, the rattle of the halters; to help seeing rows of spectral tents and the *impedimenta* of the soldiery. From within the canvases come guttural

BINCOMBE.
"It stands up among the downs."

syllables of foreign tongues, and broken songs of the fatherland; for they were mainly regiments of the King's German Legion that slept round the tent-poles hereabout at that time."

The story associated with this out-of-the-way place

is one in its chief lines true to facts, for in an unmarked grave within the little churchyard, lie two young German soldiers, shot for desertion from the York Hussars, as quoted at the end of the story from the register :

" Matth : Tina (Corpl.) in His Majesty's Regiment of York Hussars, and shot for Desertion, was Buried June 30th, 1801, aged 22 years. Born in the town of Sarrbruk, Germany."

"Christop Bless, belonging to His Majesty's Regiment of York Hussars, who was shot for Desertion, was Buried June 30th, 1801, aged 22 years. Born at Lothaargen, Alsatia."

Returning from Bincombe and down again through Sutton Poyntz to Preston, we come to Osmington, with views down along on the right to Ringstead Bay ; but, avoiding for the present the coast, strike inland, to Poxwell, the " Oxwell Hall " of *The Trumpet Major*. It is really three miles from " Overcombe," and therefore not the close neighbour to the Lovedays it is made to be, for the purposes of the novel. The church stands beside of the road, the old manor-house, now a farmstead, the home of " Uncle Benjy," miserly Squire Derriman, close by. In old days, back in 1634, when it was built, this curiously walled-in residence with its outer porter's lodge, the physical and visible sign of an ever-present distrust of strangers, was a seat of the Henning family. That lodge still stands, obsolete as an *avant-garde* and gazebo for the timely spying out of unwelcome visitors, but very admirable for a summer-house, if the farmer had leisure for such things. But as he has not, but must continually " plough and sow, and reap and

mow," or see that others do so, the lodge is in every way a derelict. The farmer could perhaps add some testimony of his own respecting all those "romantic excellencies and practical drawbacks," mentioned in the story, and existing in fact; but, farmers having a bent towards practicality, although they

POXWELL MANOR.

"The Porter's Lodge still stands, but obsolete, as a gazebo for the timely spying out of unwelcome visitors."

discuss, rather than practise it, it is to be supposed that he would place a stress upon the drawbacks, to the neglect of the romance.

Pursuing the road onwards from Poxwell, we come, in a mile and a half, to the cross-roads at

"Warm'ell Cross," leading on the left to Dorchester, on the right to Wareham, and straight ahead across the remotenesses of "Egdon Heath," to Moreton station. Here we turn to the right, and so miss the village of Warmwell, whence the cross roads take their name. It is not by any means, to the ordinary traveller, a remarkable crossing of the roads, but it has associations for the pilgrim stored with the literary lore of the Hardy Country, for it was here, in the story of *The Distracted Preacher*, that Mr. Stockdale, the Wesleyan minister of Nether Mynton, by the aid of their voices, crying "Hoi—hoi—hoi! Help, help!" discovered Will Latimer and the excise-man tied to the trees by the smuggler friends of his Lizzie. Turning here to the right, Owermoigne itself—the "Nether Mynton" of that tale of smuggled spirits and religious scruples—is reached in another mile; the church and its tiny village of thatched rusticity standing shyly, as such a smuggler's haunt should do, off the broad high road and down a little stumbly and rutty lane. The body of the church has been rebuilt since Lizzie Newberry and her friends stored "the stuff" in the tower and the churchyard, but that churchyard remains the same, as also does the tower from whose battlements the "free traders" spied upon the excisemen, searching for those hidden tubs.

From this road there is a better distant view of the great equestrian effigy of George III., cut in the chalky southern slopes of the downs, than from any other point. He looks impressive, in the ghostly sort, seen across the bare slopes, where perhaps an occasional farmstead or barton, or a row of wheat-ricks, accentuates the solitude and at

the same time gives scale to the chalky effigies of His Majesty and that very elegant horse of his, showing how very large this horse and rider really are. The gallant Trumpet Major told about the making of this memorial, as he and Anne Garland walked among the flowering peas, and described what this "huge picture of the king on horseback in the earth of the hill" was to be like: "The King's head is to be as big as our mill-pond, and

OWERMOIGNE: THE SMUGGLERS' HAUNT IN "THE DISTRACTED PREACHER."

his body as big as this garden; he and the horse will cover more than an acre."

And here he is to this day, very spirited and martial, with his cocked hat and marshal's baton.

It is, however, a weariful business to arrive in the neighbourhood of him, for those chalk downs are just as inhospitable in the sun as they are in the storms of winter, the only difference lying between being fried on their shelterless sides when the thermometer registers ninety degrees, or frozen when the mercury sinks towards zero.

Some two miles of highway along the verge of Egdon Heath bring us to a right-hand turning, leading past Winfrith Newburgh by a somewhat more shaded route up over the crest of these chalky ranges, and then with several turnings, steeply down, and at length, "by and large"—as sailors say—to the village of West Lulworth, which lies at the

LULWORTH COVE.
"An almost perfect circle, eaten out of the limestone by the sea."

inland end of a coombe, the better part of a mile from Lulworth Cove.

To Lulworth—or as he terms it, Lullstead—Cove, Mr. Hardy returns again and again. It is the "small basin of sea enclosed by the cliffs" where Troy bathed and was supposed to have been drowned; it is one of the spots where *The Distracted Preacher's* parishioners landed their smuggled spirit-tubs, and

upon its milk-white shores of limestone pebbles the lifeless bodies of Stephen Hardcombe and his companion were found. It was the first meeting-place of Cytherea Graye and Edward Springrove; and was, again, that "three-quarter round Cove" where, "screened from every mortal eye," save his own, Solomon Selby observed Bonaparte questing along the darkling shore for a suitable place where his

LULWORTH COVE.

"The Coastgard Station, perched on what looks like a hazardous pinnacle of cliffs."

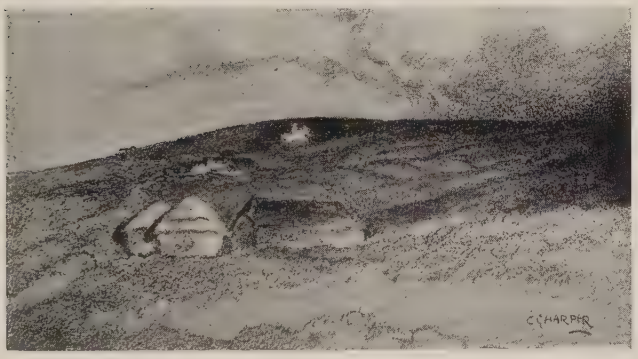
flotilla might land in his projected invasion of England.

Lulworth Cove is an almost perfect circle, eaten out of the limestone in the long ago by the sea, in an unusually geometrical manner. Bindon Hill frowns down upon it, and in summer the circle of light-blue water laughs saucily back, in little sparkling ripples, just as though there were no storms in nature and no cruel rock-bound coast

outside. The Cove is, if you be classically minded, a Bath of the Naiads; and, if less imaginative, is at any rate a delightful spot that even in these tidied-up and ordered days, when every little seaside cove has its hair brushed and face scrubbed, and is made always to look its Sunday best, persists in being littered with a longshore fishing and boating medley of anchors and lobster-pots, ropes, chains and windlasses, infinitely more pleasing to right-thinking persons—by whom I indicate those who think with myself—than the neatest of promenades and seats. True, they have rebuilt or enlarged the Cove Hotel and red-brick manifestations of a growing favour with visitors are springing up beside the old thatched cottages; but Lulworth—Cove or village—is not spoiled yet. The Coastguard Station, perched on what looks like a hazardous pinnacle of cliff, with the wild chasm of Stair Hole to one side of it and the sheer drop into the Cove on the other, is the most striking feature, looking down from landward, of this curious place, which has not its fellow anywhere else, and is the sunniest, the ruggedest, and certainly the most treeless place along the Dorset coast.

To those who have persevered along the roads into Lulworth, the prospect of again climbing those hills is perhaps a little grim, and they should so contrive to time their arrival and departure that they comfortably fit in with the return to Weymouth of the excursion steamer plying in the tourist season between the two places.

LYTCHETT HEATH.
"The black hills bulging against the sky."



THE EQUESTRIAN EFFIGY OF GEORGE III.
"It looks impressive in the ghostly sort."

ENTRANCE TO CHARBOROUGH PARK.
"The one feature that breaks the long perspective of the undeviating road."

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CHAPTER XXIV

BOURNEMOUTH TO POOLE

BOURNEMOUTH, the "Sandbourne" of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and of minor incidents and passing allusions in others of Mr. Hardy's novels, is one of the principal gates of entrance to his Wessex. Just within the western borders of Hampshire, or what he would call "Upper Wessex," the heart of his literary country is within the easiest reach of its pleasant districts of villa residences, by road or rail, or indeed by sea; for Swanage, the "Swanwich" of a Hardy gazetteer, and Lulworth Cove, his "Lullstead," that azure pool within "the two projecting spurs of rock which form the pillars of Hercules to this miniature Mediterranean," are the destinations in summer of many steamboat voyages.

"Sandbourne has become a large place, they say." Thus Angel Clare, seeking his wife somewhere within its bounds. Large indeed, and growing yet. Census officials and other statisticians toil after its increase in vain. I find a guide-book of 1887 speaking of its population as "nearly 18,000." I find another, of 1896, putting it at "about 40,000," and then referring to the last census returns, discover it to have further risen to forty-seven

thousand souls, and a few over. By now it doubtless numbers full fifty thousand, and has further rubricated and underscored its description in the last pages of *Tess* : "This fashionable watering-place with its eastern and its western stations, its piers, its groves of pines, its promenades, and its covered gardens, was to Angel Clare like a fairy place, suddenly created by the stroke of a wand, and allowed to get a little dusty. An outlying eastern tract of the enormous Egdon waste was close at hand, yet on the very verge of that tawny piece of antiquity such a glittering novelty as this pleasure city had chosen to spring up. Within the space of a mile from its outskirts every irregularity of the soil was prehistoric, every channel an undisturbed British trackway ; not a sod having been turned there since the days of the Cæsars. Yet the exotic had grown here, suddenly as the prophet's gourd ; and had drawn hither Tess."

"By the midnight lamps he went up and down the winding ways of this new world in an old one, and could discern between the trees and against the stars the lofty roofs, chimneys, gazebos, and towers of the numerous fanciful residences of which the place was composed. It was a city of detached mansions ; a Mediterranean lounging-place on the English Channel ; and as seen now by night it seemed even more imposing than it was.

"The sea was near at hand, but not intrusive ; it murmured, and he thought it was the pines, the pines murmured in precisely the same tones, and he thought they were the sea."

This rich and populous seaside home of wealthy valetudinarians was until well on into the nineteenth

BOURNEMOUTH : THE INVALID'S WALK.

"This fashionable watering-place . . . had grown here, suddenly as the prophet's gourd, and had drawn hither Tess."

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century a lonely waste, whose only frequenters were smugglers, fishermen, rabbits, and seagulls. In the midst of its pine-woods, sands, and heather a little stream, the Bourne, which now gives this great concourse of villa paradises, palatial hotels, and fashionable shops its name, flowed into the sea, just where, in these days, tricked out with cascades, and fountains, and made to wander circuitously at the will of landscape-gardeners amid the neatest of lawns and the gayest of flower-beds, it at last trickles exhaustedly into the sea, under the pier. Its natural course from the neighbourhood of Kinson, down Bourne Bottom, to that smallest of "mouths," is some six miles, but in these days it is made to work hard in the last stretch, through the public gardens, and where it once covered one mile, is now looped here and turned back there upon itself, and exploited generally, until it has become as sophisticated a stream as anywhere to be found. The Bourne is, indeed, like the humble parent of some overwhelming social success, made to alter its ways and put aside its rustic manners, to do credit to its offspring.

The country folk who live in the background of this oft-styled "City of Pines," still call it merely "Bourne," as it was when, many years ago, Dr. Granville made the fortunes of the hamlet, frequented by a few invalids and others rejoicing in the spicy odours of the pine-woods, that had grown in a scattered and chance fashion upon the heath. "No situation," said that authority upon spas and watering-places, "possesses so many capabilities of being made the very first sea watering-place in England; and not only a watering-place, but what is still more

important, a winter residence for the most delicate constitutions requiring a warm and sheltered locality at this season of the year." Then follow comparisons favourable to the site of Bournemouth, and derogatory to other seaside resorts.

Every circumstance insured attention being drawn to this weighty pronouncement, and advantage being taken of it. Consumptives came and found the air beneficial, and Bournemouth grew suddenly and astonishingly upon a lonely coast-line; arising in that residential all-round-the-calendar character it has kept to this day, in spite of those holiday-folk, the excursionists and trippers whom its "residential" stratum discourages as much as possible. But when even so thoroughly exclusive a residential health-resort has been so successful, and has grown so greatly in that character as Bournemouth has grown, there comes inevitably a time when the workers and tradesfolk, ministrants to the wants of those residents, themselves become an important section of the community. It is a time when suburbs and quarters, invidiously distinguished from one another in the social scale, have established themselves; when, in short, from being just the resort of a class, a place becomes a microcosm of life, in which all classes and degrees are represented. The seal was set upon the arrival of that time for Bournemouth with its admission to the dignity of a municipal borough, fully equipped with Mayor and Town Council, in the summer of 1890, and again, later, with the opening of electric tramways. Railway-companies urge the attractions of Bournemouth upon holiday-makers, with great success, and nowadays one only perceives the

place in anything like its former characteristic air at such time when the summer has gone and the holiday-maker has returned to his own fireside.

Bournemouth has already gathered together some odds and ends of sentimental associations. Mary Wollstonecraft, widow of Shelley, died here in 1853, and lies in the churchyard of St. Peter's, beside Godwin and his wife, whose bodies were brought from the London churchyard of St. Pancras. Keble died here in 1866, and the present St. Peter's is his memorial. Robert Louis Stevenson, Bournemouth's most distinguished consumptive, resided at "Skerryvore," in Alum Chine Road, before he took flight to the South Seas.

But—singular and ungrateful omission—one looks in vain for a statute to Dr. Granville, who, by his powerful advocacy, made Bournemouth, just as Dr. Russel made Brighton a century earlier. In this it is not difficult to find another instance of "benefits forgot."

The juxtaposition of a place so new as Bournemouth with one so ancient as Poole is a piquant circumstance. When Bournemouth rose, not like Britannia, from the azure main, but from beside it, there was a considerable interval of open country between the hoary seaport and the mint-new pleasure-town. That interval has now shrunk to vanishing-point; for, what with Bournemouth's expansion, growing Parkstone's position midway, and Poole's own attempt to sprout in an eastwardly direction, to meet those manifestations, the green country has been abolished beneath an irruption of bricks and mortar.

The piquancy of Poole's ancient repose being

neighboured by Bournemouth's wide-awake life is italicised when that port—the "Havenpool" of *To Please his Wife*—is entered. It would not be correct to say that the days of Poole as a port are over, but with the growth in size of modern ships, the shallowness of Poole Harbour in whose recesses it is tucked rather obscurely away, prevents any but vessels of slight draught coming up to its quays. For that reason, large ocean-going steamers are strangers to Poole, more familiar with wooden barques and brigantines and their maze of masts and spars, than with the capacious steamships that, although of much greater speed and tonnage, carry very slight and insignificant sticks; and were it not for the china-clay shipments and for that coasting trade which seems almost indestructible, Poole would assuredly die.

But Poole, besides being ancient, has been a place to reckon with. Already, in 1220, when by a proclamation of Henry III. the ships of many ports were sealed up, Poole appeared among the number. In 1347 its contribution towards the siege of Calais was four ships and ninety-four men, and it was the base from which the English army in France was provisioned. Then in 1349 came that fourteenth century scourge, the Black Death, and Poole, among other towns, was almost depopulated, and lost the Parliamentary representation it had long enjoyed. But it made a good recovery, and in the time of Henry VI. regained its Parliamentary representation, Leland, writing of the place describes it, two hundred years later, as "a poore fisshar village, much encreasid with fair building and use of marchaundise of old tyme." Poole, after that

description was penned, continued to recover itself, and fully regained its lost prosperity. Fifty years later it is found carrying on a thriving trade with Spain, and how truly it was said that its merchants were men of wealth and consideration may be judged from their large, and architectually and decoratively fine, mansions still remaining, although nowadays put to all kinds of mean uses and often occupied as tenements.

Poole, however, long enjoyed a very bad reputation, and the wealth of which these were some of the evidences, was not often come by in very reputable ways. When it is said that Poole "enjoyed" a bad reputation, it is said advisedly, for Poole was so lost to shame that it really *did* enjoy what should have been a source of some searchings of heart. It was a veritable nest of pirates and smugglers, and the home of strange and original sinfulnesses ; so that at last an injurious rhyme that still survives was circulated about it :

> "If Poole were a fish-pool, and the men of Poole fish,
> There'd be a pool for the devil, and fish for his dish."

So early as the close of the fourteenth century, the buccaneers of Poole were infamous, and at their head was the notorious Harry Page, known to the French and the Spaniards as Arripay, the nearest they could frame to pronounce his name. Arripay was a very full-blooded, enterprising, and unscrupulous fellow ; if without irreverence we may call him a "fellow," who was the admiral of his rascally profession. There can be little doubt but that tradition has added not a little to the tales of his exploits, and it is hardly credible that he and his fellow-pirates should, on one

occasion, have brought home a hundred and twenty prizes from the coast of Brittany. His forays were made upon the shipping of the foreigner, and with such system that no ship, it was said, could successfully run the gauntlet of his lawless flotilla. His success and power were so great that they necessitated the sending of an expedition to sweep the seas of him. This was an allied French and Spanish force, commissioned in 1406, and sailing under the command of Perdo Nino, Count of Buelna. Adopting the tactics of raiders, they burnt and ravaged the coasts of Cornwall and Devon, and, coming to Dorset, swept into Arripay's hornets' nest of Poole Harbour, and landing at Poole itself, defeated the townsmen in a pitched battle. The brother of the redoubtable Arripay was among the slain.

A worthy successor of this bold spirit in the pike and cutlass way—although he was no pirate, but just an honest stalwart sailor—was that bonny fighter, Peter Jolliffe, of the hoy *Sea Adventurer*. Off Swanage in 1694, he fell in with a French privateer having a poor little captured Weymouth fishing-smack in tow, and attacked the Frenchman repeatedly, and at last with such success, that he not only released the smack, but drove the privateer ashore near Lulworth, its crew being made prisoners of war. For so signal an instance of bravery Jolliffe received a gold chain and medal from the hands of the king himself.

Jolliffe's example fired enthusiasm, and the following year, William Thompson, skipper of a fishing-smack, aided only by his scanty crew of one man and a boy, attacked a Cherbourg privateer that had attempted to capture him, and actually succeeded in capturing it and its complement of sixteen hands,

instead. He brought his prize into Poole, and he too, fully deserved that gold chain and medal awarded him.

In St. James's church itself—disclosing an interior not unlike that of a stern cabin of an old man-o'-war, writ large—is a monument to the intrepid Jolliffe. From a reminiscence of it, no doubt, Mr. Hardy chose to name Captain Shadrach Jolliffe, that shipmaster engaged in the Newfoundland trade who is the ill-fated hero of *To Please his Wife*.

For the rest, Poole figures so largely in the Civil War, as a town ardently in favour of the Parliament, that it has a long and stirring story of its own, in the varying fortunes of Roundheads and Stuarts. It is too lengthy a story to be told with advantage here.

The High Street of Poole, a mile long, is busy enough to quite dispel any idea that Poole is not prospering; but, on the other hand, the many puzzling narrow streets that lead out of it are so rich in what have been noble residences, that they tell in unmistakable tones of a greater period than this of to-day.

These byways lead at last past the church of St. Paul, the fellow to St. James's, with its dolphin vane, to Poole Quay, where the most prominent feature is an ancient Gothic building, looking very like some desecrated place of worship, or a monastic tithe-barn. It is, as a matter of fact, neither, but the "Town Cellar," a relic of a past age when Poole was part of the manor of Canford. The lords of Canford, away back to that ubiquitous John o' Gaunt, "time-honoured Lancaster," who seems to have owned quite half of the most desirable

properties in the England of his time, took toll in money, when they could, and in kind when silver marks and golden angels were scarce; and in the "Town Cellar" were stored those bales of wool, those spices from Ind, and those miscellaneous goods, which were made in this manner to render unto the Cæsars of Canford, in times when such things were. It is a picturesque old building, its walls oddly composed of flint intermingled with large squared pieces of stone that, by the look of them, would seem to have been plundered from some older structure.

Opposite stands the Harbour Office, not altogether unpicturesquely provided with a loggia supported by columns, and still retaining the sundial erected when clocks were scarce. The Mayor of Poole, who in 1727 presided over the fortunes of the port, is handed down to posterity by the quaint tablet let into the gable wall, showing us the quarter-length relief portrait of a stout personage in voluminous wig and mayoral chain and robes, lackadaisically glancing skyward, as though longing to be gone to those ethereal regions where double chins and "too, too solid flesh" are not.

Poole Quay—its old buildings, waterside picturesqueness, and the shipping lying off the walls—is an interesting place for the artist, who has it very much to himself; for the holiday-maker does not often discover it. But waterside characters are not lacking: sailors, who have got berths and are only waiting for the tide to serve; other sailors, who are in want of berths; town boys, who would dearly like to go to sea; and nondescript characters, who would not take a job if offered to them, and want nothing but a quayside bollard to sit upon, sunshine, a pipe of

POOLE QUAY.

"The most prominent feature is an ancient Gothic building, looking very like a desecrated place of worship, but really the 'Town Cellar.'"

tobacco, and the price of half a pint : these form the natural history of Poole Quay, which though it may have been—and was—one of the gateways into the great outer world, in the brave old days of Arripay and his merry men, is now something of a straitened gate, and Poole itself for the land voyager very much in the nature of one of those stop-blocks at the end of a railway siding : what a railway man would call a "dead end."

For Poole is not a main road to anywhere, and when you have turned down into it, on those three and a half miles from Bournemouth, you are either compelled to return the way you came, or else cross a creek by the toll-bridge to Hamworthy, where there is nothing but a church built in 1826—and precisely of the nature one might expect from that date—and, a little way onward, a lonely railway junction in midst of sandy heaths and whispering pines, which, even at night, "tell the tale of their species," as phrenologists say, "without help from outline or colour," in "those melancholy moans and sobs which give to their sound a solemn sadness surpassing even that of the sea." It is the district of *The Hand of Ethelberta*, and if we pursue it, we shall, as Sol says, in that novel, "come to no place for two or three miles, and then only to Flychett," which, in everyday life, is Lytchett Minster, a place which, despite that grand name, can show nothing in the nature of a cathedral, and is, as Sol said, "a trumpery small bit of a village," where possibly that wheelwright mentioned in the story still "keeps a beer-house and owns two horses." That house is the inn oddly named the "Peter's Finger," with a picture-sign standing on a post by the wayside, and

showing St. Peter holding up a hand with two extended fingers in benedictory fashion, as though blessing the wayfarer. The origin of this sign is said to be the custom, once usual in Roman Catholic times, of holding manorial courts on Lammas Day, the 1st of August, the day of St. Peter ad Vincula —that St. Peter-in-the-Fetters to whom the church on Tower Green, in the Tower of London, is so appropriately dedicated. On that day suit and service had to be performed by tenants for their lands, which thus obtained, in course of time, the corrupted title of "Peter's Finger" property.

Around the village so slightingly characterised in *The Hand of Ethelberta* there is little save "the everlasting heath," mentioned in that story, "the black hills bulging against the sky, the barrows upon their round summits like warts on a swarthy skin." It is true the road leads at last to Bere Regis, but it has little individuality and no further Hardyesque significance, and so may be disregarded in these pages.

CHAPTER XXV

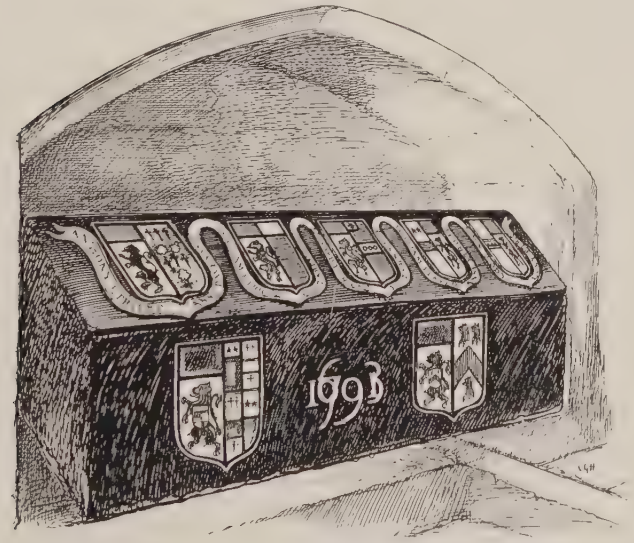
WIMBORNE MINSTER

WIMBORNE MINSTER or "Warborne" in *Two on a Tower*—is, or was, for the Romans and their works are altogether vanished from the town, the *Vindogladia* of the Antonine Itinerary. If you speak of it in the curt irreverent way of railways and their time-tables, or in the equally curt, but only familiar, manner of its inhabitants, it is merely "Wimborne." In their mouths, elision of the "Minster" merely connotes affection and use, as one drops the titles or the "Mister" of a friend, in speaking of him; but in the case of railway usage it is the offensive familiarity of the ill-bred, or, at the least, a derogatory saving of space and type.

This common practice is all the more historically an outrage, for had there been no Minster, there would have been no town of Wimborne. It derives from an early religious settlement, founded in A.D. 700 near the site of the forgotten Roman station, by Cuthburga, one of those unsatisfactory princess spouses of the pietistic period of Saxon dominion, who, married to the King of Northumbria, refused him conjugal rights and finally established herself here, living a life of "continual watchings and fastings," and finally dying of them. We are not

STURMINSTER MARSHALL.

"Its village green, bordered with scattered cottages, has a maypole."



ANTHONY ETRICKE'S TOMB, WIMBORNE MINSTER.

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concerned to follow the mazes of the early history of town and church. It suffered the usual plunderings and burnings, the nuns were occasionally carried off, sometimes against their will, at other times with their consent, and at last, somewhere about A.D. 902, monks replaced them. The whole foundation was re-established by Edward the Confessor, and remained as a Collegiate church until 1547, when it was disestablished, its revenues seized, and the building wholly converted to the purposes of a parish church.

Wimborne Minster might be made the subject of a lengthy architectural disquisition. Its two towers, western and central, are themselves pointers to its history; for they show, not in the different periods at which they were built, but in the richness of the one and the comparative plainness of the other, the combined uses of the building in days of old. The central tower, of transitional Norman design, and remarkably like the towers of Exeter cathedral, was originally surmounted by a stone spire, which fell in 1600. Its elaboration is explained by its having been a part of the monastic church, while the western tower erected about 1460, belonged to the parochial building.

The church, endowed with two—and two dissimilar—towers, is a splendid feature in the streets of the old town. It and the town gain dignity and interest in an amazing degree, and here in Wimborne the pinnacled battlemented outlines "make" both town and Minster, in the pictorial sense. They bulk darkly and largely across the yellow sandiness of the broad market-place, and sort themselves into endless and changeful combinations down the

narrower streets. Apart, too, from these important considerations, the Minster is exceptionally rich in curious features, outside its architectural details.

Our ancestors possessed a quaint mixture of serious devotion and light-hearted childishness, and we are the richer for it. Thus, high up on the external wall of the western tower, the observant will notice the odd little effigy, carved, painted and gilt, resembling a grenadier of a century ago, or a French gendarme of a past *régime*: it is difficult to assign it with certainty, and assuredly it does not look so old as 1600, the date when it is stated to have been placed here. His business is that of a quarter-jack, and he strikes the quarters upon a bell on either side of him. The clock within, an astronomical contrivance made in 1320 by that same ingenious Glastonbury monk, Peter Lightfoot, who was the author of the famous clock of Wells Cathedral, represents the courses of the sun, moon, and stars.

The Minster, in short, is a museum of antiquities, found particularly interesting by the half-day excursionists from Bournemouth who are its chief visitors and carry away a fine confused recollection of their scamper round it. Here, in a room above the vestry, is the Chained Library, a collection of over two hundred and forty volumes, mostly chained to iron rods. Some of the books are very early, but the collection was formed in 1686. Perhaps, for the sake of its story, the copy of Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World" is even more interesting than "The Whole Duty of Man" and the "Breeches Bible," for it still displays the carefully mended hundred leaves burnt through when

the boy, afterwards poet, Prior fell asleep over his reading of it and upset the candle, with this result. Each damaged page was neatly mended by him and the missing letters so carefully restored that it is difficult, until attention is drawn to the repair, to detect anything exceptional. Prior was born at Wimborne in 1664, as a brass tablet in the western tower to his "perennial and fragrant" memory tells us.

THE WIMBORNE CLOCK-JACK.

But of paramount interest to sightseers, far transcending the iron-bound deed-chests, some hollowed from a single trunk, and the tombs of the noble and knightly, is the last resting-place of Anthony Etricke, in the south wall of the choir aisle. Anthony Etricke was a personage of some local distinction in his day, for besides being a man of wealth, he was first Recorder of Poole. He has also won a little niche in the history of England by no effort of his own : a distinction thrust upon him by circumstance, and one which might have fallen upon any other local magistrate. Sentimentally speaking, it is also a wholly invidious and undesirable fame or notoriety, and was so regarded by the good folk of the town. Etricke, residing at Holt, near the spot where the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth was captured, was the magistrate before whom the wretched fugitive was brought. Another might possibly, greatly daring, have secured the escape of that romantic figure, and

by so doing at the same time have altered the course of English history and earned the admiration of those who admire chivalric deeds. But Etricke was not of this stamp, and was, moreover, of that old faith which the bigoted James was striving to re-introduce: while Monmouth was the Protestant champion. Alas! poor champion. Etricke at once performed his bounden duty as a magistrate, and also satisfied his own private feelings; and Monmouth ended miserably.

Etricke never regained popularity in his district, and lived for eighteen years longer, a shunned and soured man. The story tells how he took what may surely be regarded as the odd and altogether insufficient revenge of declaring that he would be buried neither in the church of Wimborne nor out of it, and accordingly in his lifetime had a niche prepared here, in the wall, where the polished black slate sarcophagus, still seen above ground, was placed. He was eccentric beyond this, for he had conceived the date of his death and caused it to be boldly carved on the side, between two of the seven shields of arms that in braggart fashion are made to redound to the glory of the Etricke family. That year he had imagined would be 1691, but he actually survived until 1703, and the date was accordingly altered (as seen to this day) when at last, to the satisfaction of Wimborne, he did demise. For the keeping of his tomb in good repair he left twenty shillings annually, a sum still administered by the Charity Commissioners; and it certainly cannot be said that he does not receive value for his money, because his eccentric lair is maintained, heraldic cognisances and all, in the most perfect condition.

WIMBORNE MINSTER; THE MINSTER AND THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

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Any ill-will this solemn personage may have felt towards Wimborne is altogether robbed of satisfaction nowadays, and his gloomy ghost may, for all we know, be enraged at the thought of the attraction his eccentricity has for visitors and the trade in photographs it has provoked, much to the material well-being of the town.

The pilgrim of the Hardy country, come to Wimborne—I should have said "Warborne"—to see that Grammar School where, to quote Haymoss Fry, "they draw up young gam'sters' brains like rhubarb under a ninepenny pan, my lady, excusing my common way," is like to be disappointed, for the place where "they hit so much larning into en that 'a could talk like the day of Pentecost" is no longer an ancient building. 'Tis true, the foundation is what the country folk might call an "old arnshunt" thing enough, being the work indeed of that very great founder of schools and colleges, the Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII. It was refounded by Queen Elizabeth, who stripped all the credit of this good deed in a naughty world from the memory of the pious countess, and willed that it should be styled "The Grammar School of the Foundation of Queen Elizabeth in Wimborne Minster in the County of Dorset." That was pretty bad, but worse came with the whirling years. James I., like the shabby fellow he was, raised a question respecting the validity of its charter, and was only bought off with £600; and Charles I., unlike the noble, magnanimous sovereign he is commonly thought to be, bled the institution to the tune of another £1,000, by a similar dodge. The wonder is that it has survived

at all, and not only survived, but flourished and was able, so long ago as 1851, to build itself that new and substantial home which is so scholastically useful, but at the same time disappointing to the literary pilgrim who, at the place where Swithin St. Cleeve was educated, hoped to find a picturesque building of mediæval age.

CHAPTER XXVI

WIMBORNE MINISTER TO SHAFTESBURY

Wimborne shall here be the starting-point of a twenty-eight miles route, that in its south-easterly to north-westerly direction, is as easy as the one north to south of the road between Sherborne and Weymouth. It follows the valley of the Stour the whole way, and only at its conclusion brings up butt against the hill on which Shaftesbury is built.

There is at the outset from Wimborne a choice between the easeful and the toilsome. You may elect to go directly up-along, to the height frowned down upon by the greater height of Badbury Rings, or may go more circuitously but by more level ways, through Corfe Mullen and Sturminster Marshall. On the first route, beautifully overhung by elms, lies Kingston Lacy, the old seat of the Bankes family, rebuilt by Sir Ralph Bankes in 1663, and now a very treasure-house of art and historic relics. Here one may, greatly favoured, see and touch those keys of Corfe Castle, held so stoutly by the valorous Lady Bankes in the two sieges she withstood.

A younger avenue of beeches lines the exposed road across the shoulders of what has been identified as *Mons Badonicus*—Badbury Rings—the scene of the overwhelming victory gained in A.D. 520, over

Cerdic and his Saxons by King Arthur and his Britons. In later years, when at last Saxon dominion had spread, and this had become Wessex, Saxons themselves encamped where of old they had been defeated, and after them the Danes occupied this inhospitable height. It is now tufted with a clump of fir-trees, and, solemn and darkly looming against a lowering sky, looks a fitting scene for any national portent of evil.

They are less impressive roads that lead by the Stour to Corfe Mullen and Sturminster Marshall. There the farmer reaps his heavy crops of hay and cereals, and ploughs and sows and reaps again, and history is only a matter of comparison between this year of a poor harvest, when prices are high and marketable produce little, and last year of a bumper, when the horn of Ceres was full and prices low. No matter what the yield, there is ever a something to dash the farmer's cup from his expectant lips.

At Bailey Corner, three miles from Wimborne, a broad main road branches off from our route, going to Bere Regis and Dorchester. This is the road made at the suggestion of Mr. Erle-Drax of Charborough Park, whose property, it may be supposed, gained in some way from it. Charborough Park is one of the originals whence Welland House and the tower of *Two on a Tower* were drawn, and therefore demands a deviation of two miles from our route.

It is a straight road and a lonely that leads to the main entrance-lodge of this seat of the Erle-Drax family, past a long-continued brick boundary-wall that must have cost a small fortune, and decorated at intervals with arches surmounted by effigies of

stags and lions. Time has dealt very severely with some of the squire's stags, shorn here and there of a limb, and in one instance presenting a headless awfulness to the gaze of the pilgrim, who can scarce repress a shudder at sight of it, even though the destruction provides a little comedy of its own, in the revelation that these imposing "stone" decorations are really of plaster, and hollow.

The principal entrance to Charborough Park, the one feature that breaks the long, straight perspective of this undeviating road, seems to have been erected by the squire as a species of permanent self-advertising hoarding, for it is boldly inscribed: "This road from Wimborne to Dorchester was projected and completed through the instrumentality of J. S. W. Sawbridge Erle-Drax, Esq., M.P., in the years 1841 and 1842." Cæsar himself could have done no more than was performed by this magnate of the many names, and could not with greater magnificence have suppressed the fact that what his Parliamentary influence procured, the public purse paid for.

There is this essential difference between Charborough Park and "Welland House." Charborough is very closely guarded from intrusion, and none who cannot show a real reason for entering is allowed through the jealously closed and locked gates of the lodges.

The residence of Lady Constantine was, however, very readily accessible, and, "as is occasionally the case with old-fashioned manors, possessed none of the exclusiveness found in some aristocratic settlements. The parishioners looked upon the park avenue as their natural thoroughfare, particularly for christenings, weddings, and funerals, which passed

the squire's mansion, with due considerations as to the scenic effect of the same from the manor windows." So much to show the composite nature of the scene drawn in *Two on a Tower*.

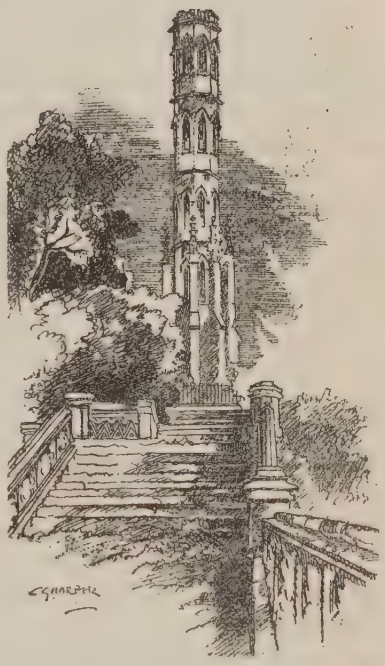
The tower—the "Rings Hill Speer" of the story—stands in the park, at a considerable distance from the house on the other side of a gentle dip, but well within sight of the drawing-room windows. In between, across the turf and disappearing into the woodlands to right and left, roam the deer that so plentifully inhabit this beautiful domain. The tower is approached by roomy stone staircases, now overgrown with grass, moss, and fungi, and so far from it or its approaches being in "the Tuscan order of architecture," they are designed in a most distinctive and aggressive Strawberry Hill Gothic manner. Built originally by Major Drax in 1796, and struck by lightning, it was rebuilt in 1839.

Returning now from this interlude and regaining Bailey Corner, we come to Sturminster Marshall, a place that now, for all the dignity of its name, is just a rustic village, with only that name and an ancient church that was the "Stour Minster" of the Earls of Pembroke, the Earls Marshal of England, to affirm its vanished importance. Its village green, bordered with scattered cottages, has a maypole, painted, like a barber's pole, with vivid bands of red, white, and blue.

An expedition from this point, across the Stour to Shapwick, although a roundabout pilgrimage, is not likely to be an unrewarded exertion, for that is a village which, although unknown to the greater world, has a local fame that, so long as

rustic satire lives, will assuredly not be allowed to die.

Shapwick is not remote from the sea, but it might be a midland village (and exceptionally ignorant at that) if we are to believe the legend which accounts for the local name of "Shapwick Wheel-offs," by which its villagers are known. According to this injurious tale, a shepherd, watching his sheep on Shapwick Down at some period unspecified—let us call it, as the children do, "once upon a time," or "ever so long ago"—found a live crab, or lobster, that had fallen out of an itinerant fishmonger's cart. He was so alarmed at the sight of the strange thing that he hurried into the village with the news of it, and brought all the people out to see. With them was the oldest inhabitant, a "tar'ble wold man," incapable of locomotion, brought in a wheelbarrow to pronounce, out of the wisdom his accumulated years gave him, what this unknown



THE TOWER, CHARBOROUGH PARK.
"Designed in a most distinctive and aggressive Strawberry Hill Gothic manner."

monster might be. When his ancient eyes lighted upon it, or rather, in the Do'set speech : "When a sin 'en, a carled out, tar'ble feared on 'en, 'wheel I off, my sonnies, wheel I off.'" So they wheeled him off, accordingly, well pleased to leave that mysterious thing to itself.

As may well be supposed, the Shapwick folk are by no means proud of their nickname, and it is therefore a little surprising to find an old and very elaborate weathervane in the village, surmounting the roof of a barn, and giving, in a quaintly silhouetted group, a pictorial representation of the scene. It seems that there were originally three more figures, behind the barrow, but they have disappeared. Perhaps this is evidence of attempts on the part of Shapwick folk to destroy the record of their shame.

A succession of pretty villages—Spettisbury, Charlton Marshall, Blandford St. Mary—enlivens the five miles of road between Sturminster Marshall and Blandford ; and then Blandford itself, already described, is entered. Passing through it, and skirting the grounds of Bryanstone, the Stour, more beautiful than earlier on the route, is crossed, and the twin villages of Durweston and Stourpaine, one on either bank, are glimpsed. Then comes the large village of Shillingstone, still steadfastly rural, despite its size, and keeping to the ancient ways more markedly than Sturminster Marshall, for it not only shares with that village the peculiarity of owning a maypole, but a maypole of exceptional height, and one still dressed and decorated with every spring. This tall pole, tapering like the mast of a ship,

is a hundred and ten feet in height, and most carefully guarded with wire stays against destruction by the stormy winds that in winter sweep down the valley of the Stour.

If we were to name the Shillingstone maypole in accordance with the date of its annual garlanding, it would rather be a "Junepole," for it is on the 9th of that month that the pretty old ceremony and its attendant merrymakings are held. This

WEATHER-VANE AT SHAPWICK: THE "SHAPWICK MONSTER."

apparently arbitrary selection of a date is explained by the old May Day games and rejoicings having been held on May 29th, in the years after the Restoration of Charles II. in 1660; and by the change from Old Style to New, more than a hundred and fifty years later. That change, taking away eleven days, converted what would have been May 29th into June 9th; and thus by gradual change this survival of the ancient pagan festival

of Floralia is held when May Day has itself passed and become a memory.

The pole has several times been restored. Its present appearance is due to the restoration of October 1868, but the arrow vane with which it was then surmounted appears to have been blown down, and its improving mottoes—"Tanquam sagitta" (Like as an arrow), and "Sic et nos" (So even we)—lost. Another Latin inscription is Englished thus:

"Their maypole, decayed by age, the rector and inhabitants of Shillingstone, keeping their yearly May Games with all due observance, have carefully restored it on the ninth day of June 1850:

> "The fading garland mourns how short life's day,
> The towering maypole heavenward points the way.
> Read thou the lesson—seek to gather now
> Undying wreaths to twine a deathless brow."

All very pious and proper, no doubt, but wofully lacking in the May Day spirit of the joy of life, and more fitting to the "Memento mori" fashion of the neighbouring churchyard.

In this old church of Shillingstone—or "Shilling-Okeford," as from the old manorial lords it was once named—the pilgrim may see by the evidence of an old tablet how a certain William Keen, a merchant of London, fleeing terrorstruck from the Great Plague, was overtaken by it and died here in 1666.

The reader, versed in the oddities of place-names, will perhaps not require the assurance that the name of Shillingstone has nothing whatever to do with shillings; but if he doubts, let it at once be said that it was so called long before that coin was known. It was originally "Oakford" and became "Schelin's Oak-

ford," or "Schelin's Town," when the manor was in Norman times given to an ancestor of those who for centuries later continued to hold it and in more elaborate fashion styled themselves Eschellings.

Down over intervening hills the road, for a little

THE MAYPOLE, SHILLINGSTONE.
"A maypole of exceptional height, carefully guarded with wire stays."

space forsaking its character of a valley route, comes beside the stream again at Piddleford—or, as the Post Office authorities prefer to call it—"Fiddleford"—on the way to Sturminster Newton, the "Stourcastle" of *Tess*. This is the place mentioned at the opening of the story, to which Tess was driving the load of beehives from Marnhull at night,

when the lantern went out and the mailcart dashing into the trap, killed the horse, Prince ; thus starting the tragical chain of events that led at last to Winchester gaol.

Of Sturminster Newton, impressively styled on ordnance maps "Sturminster Newton Castle," Leland says : "The townlette is no greate thing,

STURMINSTER NEWTON : THE WHITE HART INN.

and the building of it is mene," and, although it would not occur to a modern writer to adopt that term, certainly there is little that is notable about it. There is no "minster," no "castle," and no "new town," and little to say, save that an ancient six-arched bridge crosses the weedy Stour and that the battered stump of the market cross in the main street seems in its decay to typify the history of the

market itself. As the church has been rebuilt, and as the castle on the outskirts is now little more than a memory, the only resort is to turn for some point of interest to that quaintly thatched old inn, the White Hart, very much older than the tablet, "W. M. P. 1708," on its front would lead many to suppose. It was probably restored at that date, after those troublous times had passed in which the cross, just opposite, lost its shaft, and when, in the fighting in the streets between the Parliamentary dragoons and the associated clubmen of the west, this house and others were fired and Sturminster Newton very generally given over to the horrors of a brutal conflict between troops trained to arms and a peasantry unskilled in the use of the weapons with which they had hastily equipped themselves. But, unprofessional soldiers though they were, the clubmen at Sturminster gave an excellent account of themselves, killing and wounding a number of the dragoons, and taking sixteen others prisoners.

CHAPTER XXVII

WIMBORNE MINSTER TO SHAFTESBURY

(continued)

Onwards from Sturminster Newton the road comes into the rich Vale of Blackmore and traverses levels watered by the Lidden, in addition to the Stour. Turning here to the right-hand and avoiding the way to Stalbridge, we follow the steps of Tess to her home at "Marlott," a village to be identified with Marnhull.

Could we associate any cottage here with the birthplace of Tess, how interesting a landmark that would be! But it is not to be done. "Rolliver's," the "Pure Drop" inn, may be the "Crown," but you who call there to wet a particularly dry whistle on a scorching day will not find the name of Rolliver over the door, either of this house or of another, with the picture-sign of a dashing hussar outside. As to whether either or both of them keep "a pretty brew," as we are told Rolliver's did, I cannot tell you, for when dry, I drink ginger-beer if it is to be got, and, if it isn't, go thirsty, refusing alike malt-liquors and the abominable gaseous compounds made cheaply of harmful materials, sold expensively, and rather thirst-provoking than quenching.

Marnhull is not precisely the type of village the readers of *Tess* would picture as the home of a heroine whose adventures have so constant a background of dairying. It is, or was, a quarry-village, and the shallow pits that supplied for stone the church and the cottages are still prominent in a field to the left of the road to Shaftesbury. Thus Marnhull is somewhat formal and prim, and instead of the abundant thatch noticeable in the typical

MARNHULL.

"The church tower is a beautiful and imposing specimen of Gothic."

villages of dairy farms, its houses are roofed with slates and tiles.

The church of Marnhull has a singularly fine tower, which, although the details of its Perpendicular design are largely intermingled with Renaissance ornament, is in general outline a beautiful and imposing specimen of Gothic, built in that period—the early eighteenth century—generally thought impossible for Gothic art. It was in

1718 that this fine work arose out of the heap of ruins into which the old tower had suddenly fallen, but it has almost every appearance of being three hundred years older, and it seems likely that, as it now stands, it was a free copy of its predecessor.

The body of the church is of much earlier date, and well supplied with mediæval effigies and finely carved capitals to its pillars. But it is not without amusement that one reads the flamboyant epitaph to the Reverend Mr. Conyers Place, M.A., "the youngeſt son of an ancient and reputable family in the County of York, who, after he had been liberally educated at Trinity College, in Cambridge, was invited to the Maſter-ſhip of the Grammar School in Dorchester, which he governed many years with great succeſs and applauſe till, weary of the fatigue of it, he choſe to reſign it. He was endowed with many excellent talents, both natural and acquired : a lively wit, a sound judgement, with solid and extenſive learning : he was eminently Studious, yet remarkably facetious : attached to no party, nor addicted to any cauſe but that of Truth and Religion, in the defence of whoſe Doctrines he wrote many learned and ingenious Treatiſes ; while he was eſteemed by all worthy of the greateſt Preferments, he lived content with the praiſe of deſerving without enjoying any but the small Rectory of Poxwell, in this County, which he held two years, and in the Poſſeſsion of which he died."

Shaftesbury, six miles onward from Marnhull, is soon seen, standing as it does majestically upon a commanding hill. It looks perhaps best from the point where the old farmstead of Blynfield

stands, at the foot of the long and winding ascent, whence you see the hillside common stretching up to the very edge of the town. From distant points such as this, "Shaston," as Mr. Hardy, the milestones, and old chroniclers agree to call it, wears the look of another Jerusalem the Golden, and any who, thus looking upon this town of old romance, should chance to come no nearer, might well carry away an impression of a fairy city whose architecture was equal to both its half-legendary history and its natural surroundings. If such a traveller there be, let him rest assured that nothing in Shaftesbury, saving only the view over limitless miles of Vale, stretching away into the distance, is worth the climbing up to it, and that to make its near and intimate acquaintance is only to dispel that distant dream of an unearthly beauty which afar off seems to belong to it.

Shaftesbury's streets are in fact more than ordinarily commonplace, and its houses grossly tasteless. It is as though, despairing of ever bringing Shaftesbury back to a shadow of the magnificence of history and architecture it once enjoyed, the builders of the modern town built houses as plastiferously ugly as they could. "Shaston" is described with a wonderful sympathy and lightness of touch by Mr. Hardy :—"The ancient British Palladour was, and is, in itself the city of a dream. Vague imaginings of its castle, its three mints, its magnificent apsidal abbey, the chief glory of South Wessex, its twelve churches, its shrines, chantries, hospitals, its gabled freestone mansions—all now ruthlessly swept away—throw the visitor, even against his will, into a pensive melancholy,

which the stimulating atmosphere and limitless landscape around him can scarcely dispel. The spot was the burial-place of a king and a queen, of abbots and abbesses, saints and bishops, knights and squires. The bones of King Edward 'the Martyr,' carefully removed thither for holy preservation, brought Shaston a renown which made it the resort of pilgrims from every part of Europe, and enabled it to maintain a reputation extending far beyond English shores. To this fair creation of the great Middle Ages the Dissolution was, as historians tell us, the death-knell. With the destruction of the enormous abbey the whole place collapsed in a general ruin; the martyr's bones met with the fate of the sacred pile that held them, and not a stone is now left to tell where they lie."

"The natural picturesqueness and singularity of the town still remain; but, strange to say, these qualities, which were noted by many writers in ages when scenic beauty is said to have been unappreciated, are passed over in this, and one of the queerest and quaintest spots in England stands virtually unvisited to-day. It has a unique position on the summit of an almost perpendicular scarp, rising on the north, south and west sides of the borough out of the deep alluvial Vale of Blackmoor, the view from the Castle Green over three counties of verdant pasture—South, Mid, and Nether Wessex—being as sudden a surprise to the unexpectant traveller's eyes as the medicinal air is to his lungs. Impossible by a railway, it can best be reached on foot, next best by light vehicles; and it is hardly accessible to these but by a sort of isthmus on the north-east, that connects it with the high chalk table-land on that

side. Such is, and such was, the now-forgotten Shaston or Palladour."

That finely inaccurate chronicler, or rather romancer, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who never lacked "historical" details while his imagination remained in good preservation, has some picturesque "facts" to narrate of Shaftesbury. It was founded, says he, by Hudibras, grandfather of King Lear, a trifle of 950 years before the Christian era. Between that shamelessly absurd origin and the earliest known mention of the place, in A.D. 880, when Alfred the Great founded a nunnery here, there is thus a gulf—a very yawning gulf, too—of one thousand, eight hundred and thirty years.

"Caer Palladour," as it had been in early British times, became "Edwardstow" when, in the year 979, the body of the young king "martyred" at Corfe Castle was translated from its resting-place at Wareham, but although his shrine was the scene of many miracles and greatly resorted to, we do not find that change of name so greatly favoured as was the like change made in East Anglia, when, early in the eleventh century, the town that had been Beodric's Weorth became, with the miracle-mongering of St. Edmund's shrine, that town of St. Edmundsbury which we know as Bury St. Edmunds. No: as the expressive modern slang would phrase it, the name of "Edwardstow" never really "caught on," and Caer Palladour, which had in the beginning of Saxon rule become "Shaftesbyrig," has so remained.

Nowadays the only vestiges of the great Abbey of Shaftesbury are the fragments of encaustic tiles and carved stones, rarely and with difficulty brought to light by antiquarian societies, painfully digging

on the spot once occupied by it ; and the great abbey estates, the booty at the Dissolution seized by, or granted to, Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, now belong to the Duke of Westminster, whose Grosvenor crest of a wheatsheaf is prominent in the town.

There are three parish churches at Shaftesbury ; St. James's, as you climb upwards towards the town, and Holy Trinity and St. Peter's in the town itself. It is St. Peter's which is seen in the illustration of Gold Hill, by whose incredibly steep ascent the pilgrim takes his way up from the deep recesses of the Vale. This is the most difficult approach, paved with granite setts divided off into broad steps, so that in wet weather the hillside shall not slip away into those depths ; and with the craggy sides shored up by ancient stone buttresses of prodigious bulk. The building that closes in the view next the church tower, leaving but a narrow entrance alley into the town, is the Town Hall and Market House.

There are, of course, wider and less steep entrances to Shaftesbury, but this shows it on its most characteristic side.

Shaftesbury is chiefly associated in the pages of the Wessex novels with *Jude the Obscure*, for here it was that the long-suffering and inoffensive Phillotson—who (why ?) always reminds me of Wordsworth—obtained the school, which he and the distracting Sue were to jointly keep. Their house, "Old Grove's Place," is easily recognisable. You come to it past Bimport, near the fork of the roads that run severally to Motcombe and to East Stower, on the edge of the plateau. It is an old house with projecting porch and mullioned windows

through which it would be quite easy, as in the story, to see the movements of any one inside ; and the

GOLD HILL, SHAFTESBURY.

"The incredibly steep ascent . . . . paved with granite setts, the craggy sides shored up by ancient buttresses of prodigious bulk."

upper room over the entrance is not too high above the pavement for any one who, like Sue, leaped from the window, to alight without injury. Those

people are probably few who feel an oppressiveness in old houses such as that which worried the highly strung and neurotic Sue Bridehead: "We don't live in the school, you know," said she, "but in that ancient dwelling across the way called Old Grove's Place. It is so antique and dismal that it depresses me dreadfully. Such houses are very well to visit, but not to live in. I feel crushed into the earth by the weight of so many previous lives there spent. In a new place like these schools, there is only your own life to support."

Close by are the schools. Looking upon them the more than usually sentimental pilgrim, with, it may be, some ancient tender passages of his own, stored up in the inviolate strong-box of his memory, to be unlocked and drawn forth at odd times, may think he identifies that window whence Sue, safely out of reach, spoke with Jude, standing down on the footpath, and said, "Oh, my poor friend and comrade, you'll suffer yet!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

WIMBORNE MINSTER TO HORTON AND MONMOUTH ASH

It is by the direct road to Cranborne, and past the Gate Inn at Clapgate, that one reaches Horton, where, at the intersection of the two broad main roads from Wimborne to Cranborne, and from Shaftesbury to Ringwood, stands Horton Inn, a fine, substantial old house, once depending upon a great coaching and posting traffic, and even now that only an occasional cyclist stays the night, dispensing good, old-fashioned, solid comforts in its cosy and comfortable rooms. When Horton Inn was built, let us say somewhere about the time of Queen Anne (who, poor soul! is dead), those who designed it, disregarding any temptations to be picturesque, devoted their energies to good, honest workmanship, with the result that nowadays one sees a building certainly lacking in imagination, with windows equidistant and each the counterpart of its fellow, but disclosing in every quoin and keystone, and in each well and truly laid course of brickwork, the justness and thoroughness of its design and execution. Within doors it is the same: unobtrusive but excellent workmanship characterises panelling and window-sashes, doors and handrails,

with the result that in its old age Horton Inn has an air of distinction and dignity strongly marked to those who take an interest in technical details, and attracting the notice of even the least observant, who from its superior air generally conceive it to be an old mansion converted to its present use. It is the subject of an allusion in the tale of *Barbara of the House of Grebe* : the "Lornton Inn" whence Barbara eloped with the handsome Willowes, and where she was to meet her disfigured husband, posting along the road from Southampton, on his return from foreign parts.

The village of Horton, down the road, at some little distance from the inn, has an oddly German-looking tower to its church, containing the monument of "Squire Hastings" of Woodlands, who died, aged 99 years, in 1650.

On an eerie hillside near by, in what of old was Horton Park, but sold by the Sturts in 1793 to the Earl of Shaftesbury, and disparked, stands the many-storied tower of what was once an observatory built by Humphry Sturt. It is now an empty shell, through whose ruined windows the wind sighs mournfully at night, and the moonlight gleams ghostlike. It is an ugly enough place in daylight, but should you particularly desire to know what the creepy, uncanny feeling of being haunted is like, why then, walk up on a windy night to "The Folly," as the villagers call it, and stand in it, listening to the wind howling, grumbling or whispering in and out of the long, shaft-like building, and nocturnal birds fluttering and squeaking on the upper ledges. It is not a little gruesome.

This is one of the originals whence Mr. Hardy

THE OBSERVATORY, HORTON.

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drew his idea of the tower in *Two on a Tower*, and is certainly the most impressive of them. Very many years have passed since the old tower was used, and since the park in which it stands was converted into a farm.

The Woodlands estate, on the broad acres belonging to the Earl of Shaftesbury, is a sandy, heathy district of furze and pine-trees, with a conspicuous ridge in the midst, shaped in a semicircle and crested with those sombre trees. Here is Shag

HORTON INN: THE "LORNTON INN" OF "BARBARA OF THE HOUSE OF GREBE."

Heath and the cultivated oasis called "The Island" where on July 8th, 1685, the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth was captured, hiding amid the bracken and undergrowth, beneath an ash-tree. He might possibly have succeeded in stealing away to the coast and so escaping, despite the thoroughness of the search made by the Sussex Militia, spurred to it by the reward of £5,000, offered for the capture of the fugitive, had it not been for the information given by an old woman who lived in a cottage

near at hand. She had seen him, disguised as a shepherd, threading his way cautiously through the heath, and he was accordingly discovered near the spot she had indicated by a militiaman named Parkin. The Duke, half-starved and unkempt from his hunted wanderings since the fatal Sedgemoor fight of three days earlier, was found in possession of his

MONMOUTH ASH.

badge of the George, a pocket-book and several guineas. In his pockets were a number of peas, the remains of a quantity he had plucked, to stave off his hunger.

A total of £5,500, was divided among Lord Lumley, the officers, militiamen, and others concerned in the capture. Among these was Amy Farant,

whose information had directly led to it, and she received a sum of fifty pounds.

Local tradition points out the spot on the hill-side where this woman's cottage formerly stood, overlooking the field called "Monmouth Close"; and the horror always felt by the rustics at the taking of what they still call the "blood-money" is seen in the story told of her after-years. The price of blood brought a curse with it. She fell upon evil times, and at last lived and died in a state of rags and dirt, shunned by all. After her death, the cottage itself speedily earned a sinister reputation, and was at length either pulled down, or allowed to decay. The spot is still called locally Louse, or more genteelly Slough, Lane.

The "Monmouth Ash"—or "Aish," in the country speech—still survives, with a difference. Those who, looking upon the present tree and thinking, despite its decrepit and propped-up condition, that it cannot be over two hundred years old—and therefore that this cannot be the precise spot—may, with the reservation already made, be reassured of its absolute genuineness. The original trunk grew decayed in the long ago, and was blown down, but the present tree is a growth from the "stool," or root, of that under which the unhappy Protestant Champion was discovered.

CHAPTER XXIX

OVER THE HILLS, BEYOND THE RAINBOW

BEYOND the rainbow is Fairyland, but no one has ever penetrated to that country, save in dreams, to which nothing is impossible. There is also a Rainbow-land in Dorsetshire, certainly not impossible of achievement, but still a district of which no one knows anything, saving only those who live in it, and those sturdy fellows, the carriers, the Marco Polos and Livingstones of this age and country, who every week or so travel from it to the nearest market-town, and back again. The carriers are men of strange speech and dress. Although sturdy, they move slowly both in body and mind ; and their tilt-carts are as slow as themselves, and as dusty and travel-worn as the caravans of any African expedition. The Rainbow country of Dorset is, in fact, a country innocent of railways. It is comprised within a rough circle made by tracing a course from Bere Regis to Piddletrenthide, Cerne Abbas, Minterne Magna, Holnest, Sherborne, Milborne Port, Stalbridge, Sturminster Newton, and Blandford, and is not only in parts extremely hilly, but includes Bulbarrow, one of the highest hills in Dorsetshire, 927 feet above sea-level, and Nettlecombe Tout ; among a fine diversified array

of lesser eminences. There is thus some considerable difficulty in travelling out of it, and a very widespread disinclination to penetrate into what may, not without considerable warranty, be termed its "wilds."

Wise men, who study maps, and from the tracks of

BINGHAM'S MELCOMBE.

watercourses deduce easier, or at any rate, rather less arduous, routes, may find a means of winning to this Rainbow country by turning off the Piddletown and Bere Regis road at Burlestone, and thence making along the slight valley of the Chesil Bourne or Divelish stream. The small village of Dewlish on the map points to the amazing colonial energy

of the Roman, for here, in a district that even we moderns are accustomed to think remote, was found a fine Roman pavement, many years ago. In another two miles and a half the valley closes in, and the neighbourhood of those big brothers, Bulbarrow and Nettlecombe Tout, is evident from their smaller kindred, on either hand.

Here, under the shelter of the everlasting hills, and in a "lew" warm hollow surrounded by benignant trees that lovingly shut it in, is Bingham's Melcombe. A little pebbly brook, the Chesil Bourne, prattles down the combe, sheep-bells sound from the hillsides, cattle low in the meadows, and rooks scold and gibber, or lazily caw, in over-arching elms ; otherwise, all is still, for much more than even the rustic scenes of Mr. Hardy's especially farming story, Bingham's Melcombe is "far from the madding crowd," and there is nothing of it but a farmstead, the tiny church, and the little gem of an ancient manor-house. For all that Bingham's Melcombe is so insignificant, it has sent out at least one distinguished man. Fluellen boasted that there were "good men porn at Monmouth," and here was born that Sir Richard Bingham who earns the praise of Fuller, as being "a brave soldier and *fortis et felix* in all his undertakings." He lies, as a brave soldier should, but all brave soldiers cannot, in Westminster Abbey. The Binghams of Bingham's Melcombe came from a younger son of the Binghams of Sutton Bingham in Somersetshire, and early allied themselves with prominent families. The ducally crowned lion rampant of the Turbervilles quartered on their ancestral shield owes its place there to the marriage

of Robert Bingham, about the reign of Henry III., or Edward I., with the daughter and heiress of Robert Turberville.

These long-descended Binghams maintained their hold upon this lovely old home of theirs from the middle of the thirteenth century until recently. Now it has passed into other hands. A member of the family, Canon Bingham, was the original of the "Parson Tringham," the learned antiquary, who, in the opening pages of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, so indiscreetly informs old John Durbeyfield, the haggler, of his distinguished ancestry.

The manor-house of Bingham's Melcombe, within its courtyard, is a perfect example of a sixteenth-century country residence. The courtyard, entered by a gatehouse, discloses stone-gabled buildings at the sides, with the highly carved and decorated projecting gable of the hall in front; displaying with a wealth of mantling the Bingham coat of arms, the whole overgrown with trailing roses.

A wild, chalky country, very knobbly and with constant hills and dales, leads away to westward, past Melcombe Horsey, to the hamlet and starved hillside farms of Plush, where flints abound, water is scarce, and farmers are obliged to depend largely upon the "dew-ponds" made on the arid downs. Here is Dole's Ash farm, the original of "Flintcomb Ash," the "starve-acre place" where Tess toiled among the other weariful hands in the great swede-fields, "a hundred odd acres in one patch," with not a tree in sight: Rainbow-land is not all fertile and roseate. The farm, as Mr. Hardy describes it, is situated "above stony lanchets

—the outcrop of siliceous veins in the chalk formation, composed of myriads of loose white flints in bulbous, cusped, and phallic shapes," and is at the other extreme from the fertility and sheltered beauty of the Valley of the Frome, the "Vale of Great Dairies."

Very different from the forbidding westerly range from Bingham's Melcombe is the country immediately to the east. There the village of Milton Abbas lies enfolded between the richly wooded hills, where the little Mill Bourne rises, at the foot of an alarming but wonderfully picturesque descent; and the woodland shade comes to the back door of every cottage.

Milton Abbas is a remarkable place, and owes its long lines of regularly spaced cottages, all of the same design, to the autocratic whim of Joseph Damer, Baron Milton and first Earl of Dorchester, who (then a commoner) purchased the large and beautiful estate in 1752, and, demolishing the old village, which rose humbly on the outskirts of the magnificent abbey, rebuilt it, a mile away, in 1786. Milton Abbas is, indeed, the precursor of many recent "model" villages, and typical of the high-handed ways of the eighteenth-century landed gentry, who could not endure the sight of a cottage from the windows of their mansions; and so forthwith, in the manner of Eastern potentates, whisked whole villages and populations away from between the wind and their gentility. Each cottage is built four-square, with thatched roof and equidistant doors and windows, all in the Doll's House or Noah's Ark order of architecture, and there is scarce a pin to choose between any of them. Half-way down

the street is the almshouse, and opposite is the church, and from their presence it will be seen that Lord Dorchester's village—transplanting was complete and highly methodical. Now that time has weathered his model village, and the chestnut trees planted between the cottages have grown up, Milton Abbas is a not unpleasing curiosity.

But Milton Park, beyond the village, contains the greatest surprise, in the almost perfect condition of the surviving abbey church, rising in all the

MILTON ABBAS, AN EARLY "MODEL" VILLAGE.

stately bulk and beautiful elaboration of a cathedral, beside the great mansion built for Lord Dorchester in 1771 by Sir William Chambers, familiar to Londoners as the architect of Somerset House.

That explorer of this Wessex unknown country, this Land Beyond the Rainbow, who, setting forth uninstructed in what he shall find, comes all unwittingly upon this generally unheard-of abbey, is greatly to be envied, for it is to him as much of a surprise as though its existence had never been

breathed beyond the rim of the hills down in whose hollows it lies hid; and to him falls the exquisite pleasure of what is nothing less than a discovery. Coming into the park, all unsuspectingly, the abbey church is disclosed against a wooded background of hills, strikingly like the first glimpse of Wells Cathedral, underneath the Mendips.

Milton Abbey, the "Middleton Abbey" of *The Woodlanders*, was founded so early as A.D. 933, by Athelstan, and in thirty years from that date became a Benedictine monastery. Nothing, however, of that early time has survived, and the great building we now see belongs to the period between 1322 and 1492, when it was gradually rebuilt, after having been struck by lightning and wholly destroyed in 1309. But the noble building rising so beautifully from the gravel drives and trim lawns of this park is but a completed portion of an intended design. It consists of choir, tower, and north and south transepts, and extends a total length of 132 feet. Had not the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 put an end to this lovely retreat of the Benedictine fraternity, a nave would have been added. To Sir John Tregonwell, King's Proctor in the divorce of Henry VIII. and Katherine of Aragon, fell what may reasonably be called this fine piece of "spoil"; for the price of one thousand pounds at which he bought the monkish estates of Milton Abbas can scarce be regarded as adequate purchase money. Coming at last into the hands of Joseph Damer, the domestic offices of the monastery, which had until then survived in almost perfect condition, were with one exception utterly destroyed, and the existing mansion built in a

bastard "Gothic" style, as understood by Chambers. The sole exception is the grand Abbot's Hall, enshrined within that eighteenth-century building, and entered from the farther side of the great quadrangle. Now in use as a drawing-room, there is probably no more stately room of that description in existence. It has the combined interest and beauty of size, loftiness and exquisite workmanship in stone and carved wood, with antiquity.

ABBOT MILTON'S REBUS, MILTON ABBEY.

The abbey church stands immediately to the south of the mansion, separated from it only by lawns and a drive, and is used as a chapel by the present owner of the estate, a nephew of the late Baron Hambro, who restored it at great cost under the professional advice of that arch-restorer, Sir Gilbert Scott. The solitude, the size and beauty of the interior, are very impressive. Here is a place of worship like a cathedral, used for the prayers of a private household, and if you can by any means manage to forget the grotesque

disproportion of ancient size and magnificence to modern use, you will feel very reverent indeed.

There is a monument here to that fortunate and successful time-server, Sir John Tregonwell, who so neatly trimmed the sails of his public conduct in those times of quick-change, between the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, that, although a Roman Catholic, he managed to enrich himself at the expense of the old religion's misfortunes, and

MILTON ABBEY.

"*The Abbey Church, disclosed against a wooded background of hills.*"

to die at peace with all men, although in the possession of property belonging to others. There is also a most exquisitely sculptured marble monument by Carlini to Lady Milton, who died in 1775. It represents her in the costume of that period, with her husband bending anxiously over her. A quaint little piece of Gothic fancy will be seen on one of the walls, in the shape of the sculptured rebus of one Abbot William Middleton, with the Arabic date, 1514, and the device of a mill on a tun, or barrel. Thus did the strenuous minds of the Middle Ages unbend to childish fancies and puns in stone.

A sign of the times may be noted, in the restoration and re-dedication of the long-desecrated Chapel of St. Catherine, on the hilltop to the east of the abbey. When the monastery was dissolved,

TURNWORTH HOUSE.

"To describe it as standing in a hollow would not express the situation of the manor-house; it stood in a hole."

the chapel of course fell out of use, and so remained until recently. It had in turn been used as a pigeon-house, a labourer's cottage, a carpenter's shop, and a lumber-room, and was falling into complete decay when Mr. Everard Hambro in 1903

decided to restore it. The varied Saxon, Norman, and Perpendicular architecture was accordingly repaired, and the building reconsecrated on St. Catherine's night of the same year.

Through Winterborne Houghton, and Winterborne Stickland, two of the eleven Dorsetshire Winterbornes, named from a chalk stream that flows into the Stour at Sturminster Marshall, we come to another *Woodlanders* landmark, Turnworth House, the "Great Hintock House," where Mrs. Charmond, fascinator of the surgeon Fitzpiers, lived. It is situated just as in the tale, in a deep and lonely dell :

"To describe it as standing in a hollow would not express the situation of the manor-house ; it stood in a hole. But the hole was full of beauty. From the spot which Grace had reached a stone could easily have been thrown over or into the birds'-nested chimneys of the mansion. Its walls were surmounted by a battlemented parapet ; but the grey lead roofs were quite visible behind it, with their gutters, laps, rolls, and skylights. . . . The front of the house was an ordinary manorial presentation of Elizabethan windows, mullioned and hooded, worked in rich snuff-coloured freestone from local quarries. . . . Above the house was a dense plantation, the roots of whose trees were above the level of the chimneys."

From Turnworth the way out of Rainbow-land by way of Durweston, Stourpaine, and Blandford is easy : a *facilis descensus*, as well in spirit as in the matter of gradients, for thus you come out of the untravelled and the unknown into the well-worn tracks and intimate life of every day.

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